





## THE CERTIFICATE

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*Shelley and Keats*





# *Shelley and Keats*

*As they struck their Contemporaries*

Notes partly from Manuscript Sources

*Edited by*

Edmund Blunden



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## Preface

of the remarkable biographic essay here given? He will remember portions of it in Dowden, but the harmony of the whole merits audience. He is unlikely to happen upon the now ancient volume of *The Atlantic Monthly* in which it was published; some, aware of its importance, will have made their acquaintance with it in that gigantic volume, the British Museum. The age of comfort hints that in this matter the British Museum may be brought to any address.

Let the past master in Shelleyana, and him to whom Buxton Forman's, or Sir Sidney Colvin's, labours in Keats's biography appear but rudimentary, remember the slower pace of the general. Any repetition in this little book may then find him forgiving, and he may even like to have some of the impressions and facts, not hitherto readily produced, in convenient pigeon-hole. Some there will be to whom Elizabeth Kent's elegant and feminine sketch of a floral Shelley, or John Taylor's too few news-passages about Keats, will be fresh pasture.

EDMUND BLUNDEN.

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*Shelley*



## SHELLEY AT ETON.—I.

AFTER an absence of some months I have been reading up my *Athenæums* :—and came upon the review of “The Life of P. B. Shelley, by Capt. Medwin.” (See *Athenæum*, Nos. 1038–1039.)

As an old Etonian, allow me to express my surprise that in all the Memoirs of Shelley so little has been collected in illustration of his days at Eton. Shelley as a boy was a being never to be forgotten. He stood apart from the whole school. I have the list before me now for the year 1807—amounting to 440 boys ; and I will venture to say there is not a man of them living who does not remember Shelley for his wild and marked peculiarity. For years and years, and long before I knew that Shelley the boy was Shelley the poet and friend of Byron, he dwelt in my memory as one of those strange and unearthly compounds which sometimes, though rarely, appear in “the human form divine.” Though death has thinned our ranks, I am convinced that any biographer of Shelley might have collected many and many an anecdote highly interesting as showing the man in boyhood,—with much that stamped its force on the original bent of his sensitive and poetical mind. Either from natural delicacy of frame or from possessing a mind which in boyhood busied itself in grasping at thoughts beyond his age—probably from something of both—he shunned or despised the usual games and exercises of youth. This made him with other boys a by-word and a jest. He was known as “Mad Shelley” ; —and many a cruel torture was practised upon him for his moody and singular exclusiveness.

Shelley was my senior ; and I, in common with others, deemed him as one ranging between madness



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and folly, until one who then lived in the same house with Shelley—a boy his senior and well able to appreciate in others that talent which he largely possessed within himself—told me that in “*Mad Shelley*” there were seeds to overflowing of meditation deep and of that wild originality which is the attribute of genius. The boy, my informant, was the present barrister, Mr. Amos. For some reason or other Amos subsequently came to my tutor, the Rev. T. Carter ; and it was while living under the same roof that I gathered his opinion of the “*Mad Shelley*.” I cannot but think that if time and inclination served, this gentleman could furnish more than any other interesting details of the poet in embryo. In those days, as doubtless in these, there were a certain number of “extra masters,”—some of whom resided at the college, took boarders, and held an amphibious rank between “the tutor” and “the dame.” Among these was one “Mr. Hexter” ; who professed to be a teacher of writing,—though it must be confessed that the boys under his roof made a much greater proficiency with their knives and forks than they did with their pens in the writing school. It was with this professor of pothooks and hangers that Percy Bysshe Shelley was placed. The house was small, the number of boarders few ; and I doubt much if within those walls any intimacy was formed that grew with its growth and ripened in after life. There was, as already shown, a friendly and right understanding between Amos and himself,—but nothing more. Indeed, if I remember rightly, Shelley made no friends at Eton. He probably sought, but in vain, for a spirit congenial to his own. With the mass he had nothing in common. They could not enter into his spirit, nor he into theirs. They deemed him mad, and he despised them as fools. Singly they dared not insult him,—for “there was a method in his madness” which taught repentance : but

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the herd unite against the stricken,—and boys, like men, envy the strongest and trample on the weak.

These thoughts remind me of those occasions when poor Shelley's anguish and excitement bordered on the sublime. Conscious of his own superiority—of being the reverse of what the many deemed him—stung by the injustice of imputed madness, by the cruelty, if he were mad, of taunting the afflicted, his rage became boundless. Like Tasso's jailer, his heartless tyrants all but raised up the demon which they said was in him. I have seen him surrounded, hooted, baited like a maddened bull,—and at this distance of time I seem to hear ringing in my ears the cry which Shelley was wont to utter in his paroxysm of revengeful anger.

It may not be uninteresting to tell when and where these things occurred. At the same time it is but justice to state that the bigger boys frequently interfered to prevent acts of tyranny towards the smaller. But Shelley in his days of trial was not "a little boy"; and it often happened that one amongst the biggest of the big was singled out as the victim. In the dark winter evenings it was the practice to assemble under the cloisters previous to mounting to the "upper school." Sometimes some wicked wag would introduce a foot-ball into the forbidden ground; and the cloistered square would echo with shouts and laughter as some hapless "dandy" of the day was "nailed,"—or in other words, received a blow from the muddy, bounding ball. Poor Shelley, though anything but a fop, was often marked out for this trial of temper. But there was another practice common then, which, though usually less practical, was infinitely more galling. The particular name of some particular boy would be sounded by one, taken up by another and another, until hundreds echoed and echoed the name. At the same time, especially if the selected were a "big fellow," a path was usually made and a

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space opened for the one on whom a hundred tongues were calling. Such, I well remember, was the joke which was practised on one who certainly did not *rejoice* in the name of "Hornby,"—one who dwells in my early memory as a square-built, big boy, looking very like a staid and rather elderly gentleman, harmless and kind, and having no offence beyond the carrying a gold quizzing-glass and white cambric pocket-handkerchief and eschewing all manly sports. In his case it was "*vox et præterea nihil*" :—but with poor Shelley it was different. The Shelley! Shelley! Shelley! which was thundered in the cloisters was but too often accompanied by practical jokes,—such as knocking his books from under his arm, seizing them as he stooped to recover them, pulling and tearing his clothes, or pointing with the finger, as one Neapolitan maddens another. The result was, as stated, a paroxysm of anger which made his eyes flash like a tiger's, his cheeks grow pale as death, his limbs quiver, and his hair stand on end.

Another circumstance I perfectly remember ;—and name it because I feel certain that it called into active play a host of thought and feeling. In Shelley's days there used to be one "Walker" who lectured on astronomy, chemistry, mechanics, &c. I allude to the "Old Walker" as he was called ; a man self-taught for the most part, but possessing much of talent, and being in his nature a thousand times more clever than much learning could ever make his son. Shelley and myself and many others attended "Old Walker's" lectures ; and it may easily be imagined how the wonders of heaven, earth and electricity would seize on a mind like Shelley's. Boys have fashions in their playthings—and experimental electricity became the rage. "Like master like man," says the adage—and "Old Walker's" servant and assistant had picked up a smattering of his master's knowledge sufficient to enable him to make

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small electrical machines. These found a ready sale amongst the boys; much to the encouragement of infant science—and proving that the philosopher's man had found out the philosopher's stone. He made a small fortune for the time. Shelley was amongst the purchasers,—and, so daring and bold in his experiments, that he nearly blew up himself and Mr. Hexter's house into the bargain. Astronomy, like electricity, seized upon his imagination. His jubilee was night. His spirit bounded on the shadow of darkness, and flew to the countless worlds beyond it.

It was doubtless in moments like these that he conceived the rich fountains of poetry which subsequently burst forth from his heart,—that he pictured—

Heaven's ebon vault  
Studded with stars unutterably bright,  
Through which the moon's unclouded grandeur rolls  
To curtain her sleeping world. Yon gentle hills,  
Robed in a garment of untrodden snow;—  
Yon darksome rocks, whence icicles depend  
So stainless that their white and glittering spires  
Tinge not the moon's pure beam.

I have only to add, that about this time Shelley would often pass the hour of dinner in pursuing the unearthly wanderings of his muse. He delighted in invoking the subtleties of theory and vision, and clothing them in imagery too daring for the utterance of his pen. He saw much, but dimly—yet was too proud to lean upon a guide. He felt that knowledge is power—but paused not to reflect that both are dangerous when applied in ignorance. No wonder that he all but blew up his tutor's house in boyhood,—and his own fortunes when a man.

[*Athenæum*, March 4th, 1848; contributed, according to the editorial file, by “Merle.”]

## SHELLEY AT ETON.—II.

My attention having been recently drawn to your number of the 4th of March last, in which my early intimacy with the poet Shelley is mentioned, I write a few lines concerning Eton College as it was in the first decade of the present century; in hope that your readers—or, at all events, your correspondent on this subject—may feel an interest in such reminiscences.

At Mr. Hexter's, mentioned by your correspondent, there were only three lower boys (or fags)—Shelley, another boy since deceased, and myself. We consequently messed together, and saw a great deal of each other. Shelley and I used to amuse ourselves in composing plays, and acting them before the other lower boy,—who constituted our sole audience. Shelley entered with great vivacity into this amusement; and from the circumstances attending the theatre of our triumvirate, and other facts connected with the development of Shelley's early genius, I incline to think that if the slightest encouragement had been given at Eton to merit in English composition, verse or prose, it is highly probable that Shelley would have devoted himself with ardour to the studies of the place, and the irregularities of his mind would have been chastised by habits of patient study. Walker's lectures, mentioned by your correspondent, were perhaps an unfortunate occurrence for Shelley; as they supplied him with the means of producing interesting and dazzling results requiring very little application of mind, and as they increased his aversion to the studies of the school. By the way, your correspondent will perhaps recollect that "Old Walker" on the occasion of one of his lectures, at

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which both Shelley and myself were present, said, "Perhaps in the time of my son, if not in my own, it may come to pass that he or I shall get down from London to lecture here without being drawn by horses, but impelled by steam,"—and that thereupon there was a deafening shout of derision from nearly three hundred boys at this Warner and his Eureka.

After attending Walker's lectures, Shelley became transported with a love of chemical experiments. He did not, however, I believe, study any scientific works upon the subject:—and I think it would have been happy for him if the multitude of boys at a public school had not rendered it almost impracticable for the tutors to watch, and endeavour at least to exercise some control in directing, the pursuits and dispositions of their pupils. Whilst the characteristic of nine-tenths of Shelley's contemporaries while at school was that of listlessness to excitements derived from intellectual sources, here was a youth carried away by an impetuous enthusiasm for producing and witnessing the phenomena of nature. But no Mentor was near him,—who, not discouraging his mental activity, might at the same time have governed and directed it at a period of life when judgment is rarely dominant, and less so perhaps in proportion to the early vigour of the mind.

I think I hear, as if it were yesterday, Shelley singing, with the buoyant cheerfulness in which he often indulged, as he might be running nimbly up and down stairs, the Witches' songs in 'Macbeth.' I fancy I still hearken to his

Double, double, toil and trouble,  
Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.

From this period my intimacy with him slackened.

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Not following his new passion with the same zeal as himself, we now seldom walked or boated together in the hours between school-times. He used to call me—in a tone not altogether unfriendly, but still evincing displeasure approaching to bitterness—by the appellation of *Apurist*; indicating classically thereby one who did not appreciate properly the element of *fire*. I, on the other hand, just at this period, had begun to devote nearly all my play-hours to Latin composition,—being induced thereto by the master who presided over my *form*, and who is now Archbishop of Canterbury. . . .

I have already exceeded the limits I proposed to myself in this letter. Perhaps, if any interest shall attach to what I have written, I may indite more reminiscences concerning Shelley and his contemporaries; and among them, Matthews, the deceased author of "The Diary of an Invalid,"—who was master, or *fagger*, to Shelley and his *co-faggee*, myself. But, in conclusion, I may inform my correspondent that I have an excellent neighbour who was at Eton in the time of Shelley, and who repeats an "Eton alphabet" precisely in the tone and manner of the head master reading over an exercise "for good." Each letter of the alphabet introduces a well-known character of the Eton world at the beginning of this century, and each line recounts his peculiarities. *H* stands for *Hexter*. This writing-master was also a major in the volunteers,—whence he was often called *Hector*; and his writing pupils were in the habit of saying to him, "Major, will you mend my pen?" *Apropos* of the conventional tone of reading over an exercise "for good," your correspondent will perhaps recollect the circumstance of a boy at Carter's who was overheard by his companions, whilst he was sitting solitarily in his own room, reading over a copy of verses of his own making in the conventional tones of Dr. Goodall, the head master, and then concluding

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with—"A very good exercise, a very excellent composition ; it does you very great credit indeed ; you are a very clever boy."

I am, &c.

A. A.

[*I.e.*, ANDREW AMOS, *Athenæum*, April 15th, 1848.]



## OXFORD : A NOTEWORTHY MEETING

*July 4th, 1836.*

DEAR HUNT,

I should have written sooner to thank you, and Mrs. Hunt for her beautifully executed bust. . . . I never saw Shelley but once : he was then a student at Oxford. A friend of mine who was a fellow of Wadham invited me to spend a few days with him : he was a townsman of Shelley and very intimate with him : the consequence was that we spent a long evening together and I received an impression of the frankness and uprightness of Shelley's character which I have retained ever since. He was then a fine-looking youth—with one of those ingenuous countenances which ought never to look old. But I see by the bust that misfortune and disappointment had narrowed his features into an expression of disconsolate discontent.

In spite of the beauty of the execution the bust inflicted on me as sharp a pang as I ever felt. . . .

Yours ever,  
T. BARNES.

[Barnes was Leigh Hunt's schoolfellow and life-long friend ; he edited *The Times*, 1817—1841.]

## SHELLEY—BY ONE WHO KNEW HIM

IF photography had existed during the lifetime of Shelley, it alone would have sufficed to correct many a misconception of his character founded upon imperfect portraiture ; and even the most boyish recollections of him, matter-of-fact as they are, may help to solve the problem upon which many minds have been engaged without yet having finished the work. For Shelley still remains before the world misconceived because mis-described ; and if society is gradually clearing its ideas of the man, it is not only because the preconceptions of that multitudinous authority are themselves gradually drifting away, but also because substantial facts are slowly coming into view. Their development has been hindered by obstacles which will be understood when I have proceeded a little farther, and even within the compass of this brief sketch I hope that I shall be able to make readers on both sides of the Atlantic work their own way a little closer to the truth.

Shelley is still regarded by the majority, either as a victim of persecution, or a rebel against authority, or both,—his friends probably inclining to hold him up as a philosopher-patriot, whose resistance to intellectual oppression placed him in the condition of a martyr and robbed him of his fair share of life. My own earliest memory presents him very much in that aspect. I first recall him pale and slender, worn with anxiety, openly alluding to the marks of premature age in his own aspect, bursting with aspirations against tyranny of all kinds, and yielding to fits of dreadful despondency under sufferings inflicted by the dignitaries of the land at the instance of his own family. The circumstances

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by which he was surrounded contributed to this guise of martyrdom.

My own earliest recollections began in prison, where my father \* was incarcerated for critical remarks which at the present day would scarcely attract attention, and which were put forth in no impulse of personal hostility, but under the strongest sense of duty, with the desire to vindicate the constitutional freedom of England against the perverted control of faction and the influences of a corrupt court. At that time my father was accounted a man prone to mutiny against "the powers that be," although his political opinions belonged to a class which would now be regarded as too moderate for popular liberalism. He has been censured for literary affectation and for personal improvidence, but only by those who do not understand the real elements of his character. The leading ideas of his mind were, first, earnest duty to his country at any cost to himself; next, the sacrifice of any ordinary consideration to personal affection and friendship; and lastly, the cultivation of "the ideal," especially as it is developed in imaginative literature. His life was passed in an absolute devotion to these three principles. A one-sided frankness has blazoned to the world the sacrifices which he accepted from friends, but has whispered nothing of the more than commensurate sacrifices made on his side; and the simplicity that rendered him the creature of the library in which he lived entered into the expression of all his thoughts and feelings.

Although I can remember some of the most eminent men who visited us in prison, Shelley I cannot; but I can well recall my father's description of the young stranger who came to him breathing the classic thoughts of college, ardent with aspirations for the emancipation

\* Leigh Hunt.

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of man from intellectual slavery, and endowed by Nature with an aspect truly "angelic."

In the interval before his next visit to us, Shelley had passed through the first serious passion of his youth, had married Harriet Westbrook, had become the father of two children, and had thus to all appearance secured the transmission of the estates strictly entailed with the baronetcy,—but had also been exiled from his family-home, as well as from college, for his revolutionary and infidel principles, had gone through a course of domestic disappointment, had separated from his wife, and was threatened with the removal of his children, on the ground of the impious and "immoral" training to which they were destined under his guardianship. He came to our house for support and consolation; he found in it a home for his intellect as well as for his feelings, and he was as strictly a part of the family as any of our blood-relations, for he came and went at pleasure. I can remember that I performed his bidding equally with that of my father; and as to personal deference or regard, the only distinction which my memory can discover is, that I found in Shelley a companion whom I better understood, and whose country rambles I was more pleased to share. For this there were many reasons, and amongst them that Shelley entered more unreservedly into the sports and even the thoughts of children. I had probably awakened interest in him, not only because I was my father's eldest child, but still more because I had already begun to read with great avidity, and with an especial sense of imaginative wonders and horrors; and, familiarized with the conversation amongst literary men, I had really been able to understand something of his position, insomuch that no doubt he saw the intense interest I took in himself and his sufferings.

The emotions that he underwent were but too

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manifest in the unconcealed anxiety and the eager recital of newly awakened hopes, with intervals of the deepest depression. He suffered also from physical causes, which I then only in part understood. This suffering was traced to the attack made upon him at Tanyralt, in Wales, when, on the night of February, the 26th, 1813, some man who had been prowling about the house in which he lived first fired at him through the window, and then entered the room, escaping when the man-servant was called in by the tumult and the screams of Mrs. Shelley. The whole incident has been doubted,—why, I can hardly understand, unless the reason is that some of the conjectures in which Mrs. Shelley indulged were over-imaginative. She mentions by name a political opponent who had said that “he would drive them out of the country.” My own weak recollections point to reasons more personal. But what I do know is, that Shelley himself ascribed the injury from which he suffered to a pressure of the assassin’s knee upon him in the struggle. The complaint was of long standing ; the attacks were alarmingly severe, and the seizure very sudden. I can remember one day at Hampstead : it was soon after breakfast, and Shelley sat reading, when he suddenly threw up his book and hands, and fell back, the chair sliding sharply from under him, and he poured forth shrieks, loud and continuous, stamping his feet madly on the ground. My father rushed to him, and, while the women looked out for the usual remedies of cold water and hand-rubbing, applied a strong pressure to his side, kneading it with his hands ; and the patient seemed gradually to be relieved by that process. This happened about the time when he was most anxious for the result of the trial which was to deprive him of his children. In the intervals he sought relief in reading, in conversation,—which especially turned upon classic literature,—in

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freedom of thought and action, and in play with the children of the house. I can remember well one day when we were both for some long time engaged in gambols, broken off by my terror at his screwing up his long and curling hair into a horn, and approaching me with rampant paws and frightful gestures as some imaginative monster.

It was at this time that the incident happened which has been mentioned by my father. A poor woman had been attending her son before a criminal court in London. As they were returning home at night, fatigue and anxiety so overcame her that she fell on the ground in convulsions, where she was found by Shelley. He appealed to a very opulent person, who lived on the top of the hill, asking admission for the woman into the house, or the use of the carriage, which had just set the family down at the door. The stranger was repulsed with the cold remark that impostors swarmed everywhere, and that his own conduct was "extraordinary." The good Samaritan, whom the Christian would not help, warned the uncharitable man that such treatment of the poor is sometimes chastised by hard treatment of the rich in days of trouble; and I heard Shelley describe the manner in which the gentleman retreated into his mansion, exclaiming, "God bless me, Sir! dear me, Sir!" In the account of the occurrence given by my father, he has omitted to mention that Shelley and the woman's son, who had already carried her a considerable way up the main hill of Hampstead, brought her on from the inhospitable mansion to our house in their arms; and I believe, that, the son's strength failing, for some way down the hill into the Vale of Health Shelley carried her on his back. I cannot help contrasting this action of the wanderer with the careful self-regard of another friend who often came to see us, though I do not remember that any of us were

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ever inside his doors. He was, I believe, for some time actually a pensioner on Shelley's generosity, though he ultimately rose to be comparatively wealthy. One night, when he had been visiting us, he was in trouble because no person had been sent from a tavern at the top of the hill to light him up the pathway across the heath. This same self-caring gentleman afterwards became one of the apologists who most powerfully contributed to mislead public opinion in regard to his benefactor.

Shelley often called me for a long ramble on the heath, or into regions which I then thought far distant ; and I went with him rather than with my father, because he walked faster, and talked with me while he walked, instead of being lost in his own thoughts and conversing only at intervals. A love of wandering seemed to possess him in the most literal sense ; his rambles appeared to be without design, or any limit but my fatigue ; and when I was " done up," he carried me home in his arms, on his shoulder, or pickback. Our communion was not always concord ; as I have intimated, he took a pleasure in frightening me, though I never really lost my confidence in his protection, if he would only drop the fantastic aspects that he delighted to assume. Sometimes, but much more rarely, he teased me with exasperating banter ; and, inheriting from some of my progenitors a vindictive temper, I once retaliated severely. We were in the sitting-room with my father and some others, while I was tortured. The chancery-suit was just then approaching its most critical point, and, to inflict the cruellest stroke I could think of, I looked him in the face, and expressed a hope that he would be beaten in the trial and have his children taken from him. I was sitting on his knee, and as I spoke, he let himself fall listlessly back in his chair, without attempting to con-

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ceal the shock I had given him. But presently he folded his arms round me and kissed me ; and I perfectly understood that he saw how sorry I was, and was as anxious as I was to be friends again. It was not very long after that we were playing with paper boats on the pond in the Vale of Health, watching the way in which the wind carried some of them over, or swamped most of them before they had surmounted many billows ; and Shelley then playfully said how much he should like it, if we could get into one of the boats and be shipwrecked,—it was a death he should like better than any other.

After the death of Harriet, Shelley's life entirely changed ; and I think I shall be able to show in the sequel that the change was far greater than any of his biographers, except perhaps one who was most likely to know, have acknowledged. Conventional form and Shelley are almost incompatible ideas ; as his admirable wife has said of him, " He lived to idealize reality,—to ally the love of abstract truth, and adoration of abstract good, with the living sympathies. And long as he did this without injury to others, he had the reverse of any respect for the dictates of orthodoxy or convention." As soon, therefore, as the obstacle to a second marriage was removed, he and Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin were regularly joined in matrimony, and retired to Great Marlow, in Buckinghamshire. A brief year Shelley passed in the position of a country-gentleman on a small scale. His abode was a rough house in the village, with a garden at the back and nothing beyond but the country. Close to the house there was a small pleasure-ground, with a mound at the farther end of the lawn slightly inclosing the view. Behind the mound there was a kitchen-garden, not unintermixed with flowers and ornamental vegetation ; and farther still was a piece of ground traversed by a lane deeply



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excavated in the chalk soil. At that time Shelley had a thousand a year allowed to him by his father ; but although he was in no respect the unreckoning, wasteful person that many have represented him to be, such a sum must have been insufficient for the mode in which he lived. His family comprised himself, Mary, William their eldest son, and Claire Claremont,—the daughter of Godwin's second wife, and therefore the half-sister of Mary Shelley,—a girl of great ability, strong feelings, lively temper, and, though not regularly handsome, of brilliant appearance. They kept three servants, if not a fourth assistant : a cook ; Élise, a Swiss *gouvernante* for the child ; and Harry, a man who did the work of gardener and man-servant in general. He kept something like open house ; for while I was there with my father and mother, there also came, for a short time, several other friends, some of whom stopped for more than a passing visit. He played the Lord Bountiful among his humbler neighbours, not only helping them with money or money's-worth, but also advising them in sickness ; for he had made some study of medicine, in part, I suspect, to be the more useful.

I have already intimated that he had assisted certain of his companions ; and I am convinced that these circumstances contributed to the resolution which Shelley formed to leave England for Italy in the year 1818, although he then ascribed his doing so to the score of health,—or rather, as he said, of life. He then believed himself to be labouring under a tendency to consumption, not without medical warnings to that effect, although there were strong reasons for doubting the validity of the belief, which was based upon less precise grounds before the introduction of auscultation and the careful examinations of our day. It was, however, characteristic of Shelley to rest his actions upon

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the dominant motive ; so that, if several inducements operated to the same end, he absolutely discarded the minor considerations, and acted solely upon the grand one. I can well remember, that, when other persons urged upon him cumulative reasons for any course of action, whether in politics, or morality, or trifling personal matters of the day, he indignantly cast aside all such makeweights, and insisted upon the one sufficient motive. I mention this the more explicitly because the opposite course is the most common, and some who did not sympathize with his concentration of purpose afterwards imputed the suppression of all but one, out of several apparent motives, to reserve, or even to a want of candour. The accusation was first made by some of Shelley's false friends—creatures who gathered round him to get what they could, and afterwards made a market of their connection, to his disadvantage. But I was shocked to find a sanction for the notion under the hand of one of Shelley's first and most faithful friends, and I discovered it, too, when death had barred me from the opportunity of controverting the mistake. It was easily accounted for. The writer to whom I allude was himself a person whose scrupulous conscience and strong mistrust of his own judgment, unless supported on every side, induced him to accumulate and to avow as many motives as possible for each single act. He could scarcely understand or believe the existence of a mind which, although powerful and comprehensive in its grasp, should nevertheless deliberately set aside all motives but one, and actually proceed upon that exclusive ground without regard to the others.

Both Shelley and his friends seem to have underrated his strength, and one little incident will illustrate my meaning. He kept no horse or carriage ; but in accordance with his ruling passion he had a boat on

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the river of sufficient size to carry a numerous party. It was made both for sailing and rowing ; and I can remember being one of an expedition which went some distance up the Thames, when Shelley himself towed the boat on the return home, while I walked by his side. His health had very much improved with the change that had taken place in his mode of life, his more settled condition, and the abatement of anxiety, with the absolute removal of some of its causes. I am well aware that he *had* suffered severely, and that he continued to be haunted by certain recollections, partly real and partly imaginative, which pursued him like an Orestes. He frequently talked on such subjects ; but it has always appeared to me that those who have reported what he said have been guilty of a singular confusion in their interpretations. As I proceed, you will find that certain facts in his life have never yet been distinctly related, and I have a strong reason for believing that some circumstances of which I became accidentally aware were never disclosed at all, except to Mary ; while in her writings I can trace allusions to them, that remind me of passages in ancient authors,—in Ovid, for instance,—which would have been absolutely unintelligible, except for accidental references. In spite, however, of the rude trials to which his constitution had been subjected, and of new symptoms supposed to indicate pulmonary weakness, there was a marked improvement in his aspect since he had visited London. He still had that ultra-youthful figure that partook the traits of the hobbledehoy, arrived at man's stature, but not yet possessing the full manly proportions. His extremities were large, his limbs long, his face small, and his thorax very partially developed, especially in girth. An habitual eagerness of mood, thrusting forward his face, made him stoop, with sunken chest and rounded

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shoulders ; and this was even more apparent in the easy costume of the country than in London dress. But in his countenance there was life instead of weariness ; melancholy more often yielded to alternations of bright thoughts ; and paleness had given way to a certain freshness of colour, with something like roses in the cheeks. Notwithstanding the sense of weakness in the chest, which attacked him on any sudden effort, his power of exertion was considerable. Once, returning from a long excursion, and entering the house by the back way, up a precipitous, though not perpendicular bank, the women of the party had to be helped ; and Shelley was the most active in rendering that assistance. While others were content to accomplish the feat for one, he, I think, helped three up the bank, sliding in a half-sitting posture when he returned to fetch a new charge. I well remember his shooting past me in a cloud of chalk-dust, as I was slowly climbing up. He had a fit of panting after it, but he made light of the exertion. I can also recollect, that, although he frequently preferred to steer rather than to put forth his strength, yet, if it were necessary, he would take an oar, and could stick to his seat for any time against any force of current or of wind, not only without complaining, but without being compelled to give in until the set task was accomplished, though it should involve some miles of hard pulling. These facts indicate the amount of "grit" that lay under the outward appearance of weakness and excitable nerves.

Shelley's fulness of vitality did not at that time seem to be shared by the partner of his life. Mary's intellectual powers had already been manifested. He must to some extent have known the force of her affection, and the tenderness of her nature ; but it is remarkable that her youth was not the period of her greatest beauty, and certainly at that date she did not

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do justice to herself either in her aspect or in the tone of her conversation. She was singularly pale. With a figure that needed to be set off, she was careless in her dress ; and the decision of purpose which ultimately gained her the playful title of " Wilful Woman " then appeared, at least in society, principally in the negative form,—her temper being easily crossed, and her resentments taking a somewhat querulous and peevish tone. Both of the pair were still young, and their ideas of education were adverse to the received doctrines of the day, rather than substantive ; and their own principles in this matter were exemplified somewhat perversely by little William. Even at that early age the child called forth frequent and poignant remonstrances from his *gouvernante*, and occasionally drew perplexed exclamations or desponding looks from his father, who took the child's little perversities seriously to heart, and sometimes vented his embarrassment in generalized remarks on human nature.

Some years elapsed between the night when I saw Shelley pack up his pistols—which he allowed me to examine—for his departure for the South, and the moment when, after our own arrival in Italy, my attention was again called to his presence by the shrill sound of his voice, as he rushed into my father's arms, which he did with an impetuosity and a fervour scarcely to be imagined by any who did not know the intensity of his feelings and the deep nature of his affection for that friend. I remember his crying out that he was " so *inexpressibly* delighted !—you cannot think how *inexpressibly* happy it makes me ! ”

The history of Shelley's brief visit to Pisa has been related by many, and is, I believe, told in his published letters ; but it appears to me that those who have recounted it have in some respects fallen short. Excepting Mary Shelley, the best-informed spoke too soon

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after the event. Shelley's own letters are slightly misleading, from a very intelligible cause. After he had encouraged, if he did not suggest, the enterprise of "The Liberal,"—and I believe it would be nearly impossible for any one of the three men interested in that venture to ascertain exactly who was its author,—his mind misgave him. He knew my father's necessities and his childish capacities for business. With a keen sense of the power displayed in "Don Juan," and even in more melodramatic works, Shelley had acquired a full knowledge of the singularly licentious training from which Byron had then scarcely emerged, and of the vacillating caprice which enfeebled all his actions. His own ability to grapple with practical affairs was very great; but he himself had scarcely formed a sufficient estimate of it. Determined to maintain a thorough equality and freedom with the noble bard in their social relations, he shrank from any position which might raise in Byron's jealous and unstable mind the idea that he was under pressure; yet he was anxious to prevent disappointment for Leigh Hunt. He dreaded failure, and resolved that he would do his best to prevent it; and yet again he scarcely anticipated success.

As early as the end of 1818, he described the way in which Byron spent his life, after he had been partly exiled, partly emancipated from the ordinary restraints of society. At that time "the Italian women were the most contemptible of all who existed under the moon,—an ordinary Englishman could not approach them"; "but," writes Shelley, "Lord Byron is familiar with the lowest sort of these women,—the people his *gondolieri* pick up in the streets." Byron's curiosity, indeed, tempted him to learn something of vice in its most revolting aspects. "He has," writes Shelley, "a certain degree of candour, while you talk

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to him, but unfortunately it does not outlast your departure." I am sure that before 1821 Byron had risen in his friend's estimation, or the "Liberal" scheme would never have been contemplated; and there were excellent reasons for the change. It is only by degrees that men have learned to appreciate at once the extraordinary nature and force of Byron's genius and the equally monstrous and marvellous nature of the evil training by which he was "dragged up." In the midst of extravagant license he gained experiences which might have extinguished his mind, but which, as they did not have that effect, added to his resources. In the process some of his personal qualities as a companion suffered severely. Very few grown men have been so extravagantly sensitive to personal approbation; and he was anxious to conciliate the liking of all who approached him, however foreign to his own set, however humble, or however insignificant. He was as mistrustful as a greedy child. He could be extravagant, but he was not open-handed; and yet he would give up what he coveted for himself, if he were urged by those whose esteem he desired to win. Now, of all persons who came near him, Shelley was the one that combined the greatest number of qualities calculated to influence a creature like Byron. He was of gentle blood; he was as resolute as he was able to maintain what is popularly called an independent position; he was truly sincere; and his way of life displayed a purity which Byron admired, though he fell from it so lamentably. On the other hand, Shelley was at odds with society on the very same questions of morals; he possessed all the philosophy for understanding the complicated perplexities of aberrant genius; did actually make allowances for Byron; estimated his powers more accurately, and therefore more highly, than any other person who came near him; and thus commanded at once his sympathies,

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his ambition, and his confidence. Everybody knows that in the interval between 1818 and the date of his death at Missolonghi, Byron's discipline of life had undergone a marked and beneficial change, and many agencies have been mentioned as contributing to that result, but I am sure that no one was so all-sufficient as the personal association with Shelley. Nothing of this is gainsaid by the fact that the greater part of this improvement was displayed after Shelley's death. Change of scene, intercourse with others, opportunities for acting upon his new principles, all helped, together, probably, with the graver sense of counsel bequeathed by the friend whom he had lost. Certain it is that Byron never mentioned Shelley in my hearing without a peculiarly emphatic manner. I know that to more than one person he performed acts of kindness and friendly aid as tributes to the memory of Shelley; and if any action were urged upon him as worthy of his own genius and dignity, nothing clenched the appeal like the name of Shelley. But if you will for a moment compare the characters of the two men,—if you will contrast the large self-sacrifice of the one with the self-indulgence of the other, the independence of the one with the craving of the other for approval, the absolute trust in human hope and goodness of Shelley with the *blasé* cynicism of Byron, I think two conclusions must instantly strike you,—first, that Shelley must have possessed almost unequalled power of influence over those who surrounded him, and, secondly, that Byron himself must have been a much better man, or possessing much more in common with Shelley than society or some of his most intellectual companions at all imagined. Part of the facts bearing upon the subject have come out since the death of both. My own attention was drawn to the point by the striking discord between the way in which other people speak of their



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relations and the manner of Shelley and Byron towards each other, and especially Byron's way in speaking of Shelley. It is not probable that Shelley formed to himself any such idea of his own power ; yet you will find hints at it in his letters, you will see curious traces of it in the letters of others, and nothing else will fully explain the change in Byron's life. Moreover, it reconciles the apparent inconsistencies of Shelley's reservations in talking about Byron with his manifest and practical confidence in the result of their joint working.

When I met Shelley again in Italy, it was easy to see that a grand change had come over his appearance and condition. The Southern climate had suited him, and the boat which caused his death had in the meanwhile been instrumental in developing his life. His retirement from painful personal conflict had given him greater ease ; intercourse with Mary had made his life better ; and, not to overlook one important fact, he had *grown* since he left England. For physiologists attest the truth, that growth continues throughout human existence, even until after decay begins ; and Shelley's constitution was of that kind—strong in some of its developments, slow in others—which needed longer time than many to arrive at its full proportions. For instance, in the interval since I had seen him his chest had manifestly become of a larger girth. I am speaking only upon distant recollection ; but I should judge it to have been three or four inches larger round, or perhaps more. His voice was stronger, his manner more confident and downright, and, although not less emphatic, yet decidedly less impulsively changeful. I can recall his reading from an ancient author, translating as he went, a passage about the making of the first man ; and I remember it from the subject and from the easy flow of his translation, but chiefly from the air of strength and cheerfulness which I noticed in his voice

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and manner. In nothing, however, does Shelley appear to me to have been so misdescribed as in the outward man,—partly, as usual, from overstatement of peculiarities, and partly because each artist has painted the portrait from his own favourite view. Many, through exaggeration, or imperfect knowledge, have equally misconstrued his moral character, and have omitted to report the real conduct of his understanding as he advanced towards “the middle of the way of life.”

From the story of his life after I first saw him, as well as from many things that I have heard him say of his family, and the strange recollections that he had of home, it is easy to understand the general tenor of his early life. Through some caprice in genealogical chemistry, in Percy the Shelley race struck out an entirely new idea : an apparent caprice in the sequence of houses that has often been noticed. For how often may we observe that the union of the most remarkable intellects produces a *tertium quid* which is the reverse of an equivalent to the combined totals, representing only a fraction of their qualities, and that fraction in its negative aspect ; while, on the other hand, rivulets of blood which have gained for themselves no name upon earth may combine to form a river illustrious to the whole world. In the latter case, not an unusual effect is that those who are charged with the infancy of the new type in the family are incompetent to their duty ; and accordingly Shelley was regarded merely as “a strange boy,” wayward, mutinous, and to be severely chastised into obedience. It has been said that he attracted no particular notice at school ; but this is not true. At Eton his resentment of tyrannical authority displayed itself not only against the masters, but against the privileges of young patricians. He refused to be “fag” ; and on one occasion he so braved the youthful public-opinion, that, on being

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dared to the act by the surrounding boys, he pinned a companion's hand to the table with a fork. According to my recollection, the immediate provocative was that he was dared to do it ; but the incident arose out of his resistance to the seniors amongst the scholars and to the customs of the school. It was evident that the masters had their eye upon him. Such a youth, with a command of language that was a born faculty and not simply acquired, *must* have attracted very positive attention on the part of the teachers ; but it was certain, that, with the tendencies of those days, they would have thought it discreet to say as little as possible about the slender mutineer. It is equally well known, that, notwithstanding his youth, religious opinions caused his expulsion from college ; and when we turn to the earliest of his writings which assumed anything like a complete shape, we discover at once the nature of those powers which could not have been overlooked,—we detect the genius, the revolutionary ideas, and the extraordinary command which he had acquired over the subject-matter of much that is taught in schools and colleges. Amid the orthodox reaction that followed upon the French Revolution, he was struck with the excesses to which despotic power could be carried. He read history with sympathies for the natural impulses and aspirations of the race, as opposed to the small circles which comprise established authorities. He looked upon knowledge as the means of serving, not enslaving the race. And therefore, while he excused the crimes of the Revolution, on the score of the ignorance in which the people had been kept, their sufferings, and the natural revulsion against such painful down-treading, he regarded the counter acts of authority as a treachery to wisdom itself. He says,—

Hath Nature's soul,  
That formed this world so beautiful . . .

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And filled the meanest worm that crawls in dust  
With spirit, thought, and love ; on Man alone,  
Partial in causeless malice, wantonly  
Heaped ruin, vice, and slavery ? . . .

Nature !—no !

Kings, priests, and statesmen, blast the human flower  
Even in its tender bud ; their influence darts  
Like subtle poison through the bloodless veins  
Of desolate society.

The pretension of authority to speak with a supernatural warrant provoked him to deny the warrant itself, or the sources from which it was said to emanate.

Is there a God !—ay, an almighty God,  
And vengeful as almighty ! Once His voice  
Was heard on earth : earth shuddered at the sound ;  
The fiery-visaged firmament expressed  
Abhorrence, and the grave of Nature yawned  
To swallow all the dauntless and the good  
That dared to hurl defiance at His throne,  
Girt as it was with power. None but slaves  
Survived,—cold-blooded slaves, who did the work  
Of tyrannous omnipotence ; . . .

To these superstitious and ambitious pretensions he traced the corruption which disorganized society, leading it down even to the very worst immoralities.

All things are sold : the very light of Heaven  
Is venal ; . . .  
Those duties which his heart of human love  
Should urge him to perform instinctively,  
Are bought and sold as in a public mart

Even love is sold ; the solace of all woe  
Is turned to deadliest agony, old age  
Shivers in selfish beauty's loathing arms,  
And youth's corrupted impulses prepare  
A life of horror from the blighting bane  
Of commerce ; whilst the pestilence that springs  
From unenjoying sensualism, has filled  
All human life with hydra-headed woes.

“ Shelley,” says Mary, in her note on the poem,

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“ was eighteen when he wrote ‘ Queen Mab.’ He never published it. When it was written, he had come to the decision that he was too young to be a judge of controversies.” The wife-editor refers to a series of articles published in the *New Monthly Magazine* for 1832 by a fellow-collegian, a warm friend of Shelley’s, touching upon his school-life, and describing the state of his mind at college. The worst of all these biographical sketches of remarkable men is, that delicacy, discretion, or some other euphemistically named form of hesitancy, induces writers to suppress the incidents which supply the very angles of the form they want to delineate ; and it is especially so in Shelley’s case. I am sure, that, if Mary, or my father, or any of those with whom Shelley conversed most thoroughly, had related some of the more extravagant incidents of his early life exactly as they occurred, we should better understand the tenor of his thought,—and we should also have the most valuable complement to that part of his intellectual progress which stands in contrast with the earlier portion. Now, as I have said, at school Shelley was a more practical and impracticable mutineer than his friends have generally allowed. They have been anxious to soften his “ faults ” ; and the consequence is, that we miss the force of the boy’s logic and the vigour of his Catonian experiments.

Again, accident has made me aware of facts which give me to understand, that, in passing through the usual curriculum of a college life in all its paths, Shelley did not go scatheless,—but that, in the tampering with venal pleasures, his health was seriously, and not transiently, injured. The effect was far greater on his mind than on his body ; and the intellectual being greater than the physical power, the healthy reaction was greater. But that reaction was also, especially in early youth, principally marked by horror and

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antagonism. Conscientious, far beyond even the ordinary maximum amongst ordinary men, he felt bound to denounce the mischief from which he saw others suffer more severely than himself, since in them there was no such reaction. I have no doubt that he himself would have spoken even plainer language, though to me his language is perfectly transparent, if he had not been restrained by a superstitious notion of his own, that the true escape from the pestilent and abhorrent brutalities which he detected around him in "real" life is found in "the ideal" form of thought and language. Ardent and romantic, he was eager to discover beauty "beneath" every natural aspect. Of all men living, I am the one most bound to be aware of the inconsistency; but you will see it reconciled a little later.

Shelley left college prone "to fall in love,"—having already, indeed, gone through some very slight experiences of that process. In his wanderings, in a humble position which conciliated rather than repelled him, he met with Harriet Westbrooke, a very comely, pleasing, and simple type of girlhood. She was at some disadvantage, under some kind of domestic oppression; so she served at once as an object for his disengaged affection, and a subject for his liberating theories, and as a substratum for the idealizing process upon which he constructed a fictitious creation of Harriet Westbrooke. His dreams bearing but a faint and controversial resemblance to the Harriet Westbrooke of daily life, the fictitious image prevented him from knowing her, until the reality broke through the poetical vision only to shock him by its inferiority or repulsiveness. As to the poor girl herself, she never had the capacity for learning to know him. In the sequel she proved to be the not unwilling slave of a petty domestic intrigue,—oppression from which he

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would have rescued her. Married life enabled him to discover that she was the reverse of the being that he had fancied. They were first married in Scotland in 1811. Shelley made acquaintance with the Godwins in 1812, before his eldest child was born. I am not sure whether he was acquainted with Mary at that time ; but some circumstances which I cannot verify make me doubt it. Harriet's daughter was born early in the summer of 1813, and it was before the close of that year that the couple began to disagree. The wife was evidently under the dominion of a relative whose influence was injurious to her. I do not find a hint of any imputation upon what is usually called her "fidelity" ; but the relative manifestly desired to show her power over both. It is probable that at an early day Shelley's disposition to see "sermons in stones and good in everything" made him think better of that interloping lady than she deserved,—and that consequently he not only gave her encouragement, but committed himself to something which, to Harriet's mind, justified her deference for ill-considered advice. It is very likely that she was counselled to extend her power over Shelley in a manner which her own simple nature would not have suggested ; but, being as foolish as it was cunning and vulgar, such conduct could have no result but that of repelling a man like Shelley. That he acquired a detestation of the relative is a certain fact. He must have been expecting a second child when he formally remarried Harriet in England on the twenty-fourth of March, 1814 ; and that ceremony has been mentioned by several writers to prove the most opposite conclusions,—that Shelley was devoted to his first wife, and that he behaved to her with the basest hypocrisy. It proves nothing but his desire to place the hereditary rights of the second child, who might be a boy, beyond doubt ; and the precaution was justified by the event.

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Before the close of the same year Harriet returned to her father's house, and there she gave birth to a son, Charles, who would have inherited the baronetcy, if he had not died in 1826, after his father's death. The parting took place about the twenty-fourth of June, 1814; and at the same time Shelley wrote a poem, of which fragments are given in the recently published "Relics." The verse shows, first, that Shelley was suffering severely from the chronic conflict which he had undergone, and, secondly, that he had found some novel comfort in the intercourse with Mary.

To sit and curb the soul's mute rage  
Which preys upon itself alone;  
To curse the life which is the cage  
Of fettered grief that dares not groan,  
Hiding from many a careless eye  
The scorn'd load of agony.  
Upon my heart thy accents sweet  
Of peace and pity fell like dew  
On flowers half dead . . .  
We are not happy, sweet! our state  
Is strange and full of doubt and fear;  
More need of words that ills abate;  
Reserve or censure come not near  
Our sacred friendship, lest there be  
No solace left for thee and me.

It is obvious that considerably after the date of this poem Harriet remained in amicable correspondence with Shelley; and not only so, but, while she altogether abstained from opposing his new connection, she was actually on friendly terms with Mary. It is easy to understand how a limited nature like Harriet's should be worn out by the exaction and impracticability of one like Shelley; for to her most impracticable would seem his lofty and ideal requirements. On the other hand, it is evident that Shelley regarded the unfortunate girl with feelings of deep commiseration; and I know that



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he not only pitied her, but felt strong compunctions for the share which his own mistaken conduct at the beginning, even more than at the end, had had in drawing her aside from what would have been her natural course in ordinary life. Mary, I believe, clearly understood the whole case, and felt nothing but compassion for one who was a "victim to circumstances."

The sequel has been alluded to in several publications, but so obscurely as to be more than unintelligible ; for the reader is led to conclusions the reverse of the fact. In the "Memorials," at page 65, the subject is barely touched upon. I take the whole passage.

"Towards the close of 1813, estrangements, which for some time had been slowly growing between Mr. and Mrs. Shelley, came to a crisis. Separation ensued ; and Mrs. Shelley returned to her father's house. Here she gave birth to her second child,—a son, who died in 1826.

"The occurrences of this painful epoch in Shelley's life, and the causes which led to them, I am spared from relating. In Mary Shelley's own words :—'This is not the time to relate the truth ; and I should reject any colouring of the truth.'

"Of those remaining who were intimate with Shelley at this time, each has given us a different version of this sad event, coloured by his own views and personal feelings. Evidently, Shelley confided to none of these friends. We, who bear his name and are of his family, have in our possession papers written by his own hand, which, in after-years, may make the story of his life complete, and which few now living, except Shelley's own children, have ever perused.

"One mistake which has gone forth to the world we feel ourselves called upon positively to contradict. Harriet's death has sometimes been ascribed to Shelley.

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This is entirely false. There was no immediate connection whatever between her tragic end and any conduct on the part of her husband."

At the end of the "Relics" is a memorandum entitled, "Harriet Shelley and Mr. Thomas Love Peacock." Mr. Peacock had been writing in *Fraser's Magazine* a series of articles on Shelley; in *Macmillan's Magazine* for June, 1860, was an article by Mr. Richard Garnet, entitled, "Shelley in Pall-Mall"; to this Mr. Peacock replied in "Percy Bysshe Shelley: Supplementary Notice"; and Mr. Garnet rejoined in the new little volume which he has edited. The main purpose of this last notice is, to show that Mr. Peacock was not accurate in his chronology or in his interpretation of the severance between Shelley and Harriet. Alluding either to the discretion which prevented Shelley from making a confidant of Mr. Peacock, or to his grief occasioned by the fate of Harriet, the writer refers to "the proof which exists in a series of letters written by Shelley at this very time to one in whom he had confidence, and at present in possession of his family," and then proceeds thus:—"Nothing more beautiful or characteristic ever proceeded from his pen; and they afford the most unequivocal testimony of the grief and horror occasioned by the tragical incident to which they bear reference. Yet self-reproach formed no element of his sorrow, in the midst of which he could proudly say, '—, —,' (mentioning two dry, unbiased men of business), 'every one, does me full justice, bears testimony to the uprightness and liberality of my conduct to her.'"

In the "Memorials" and the "Relics" there is no further allusion to the circumstances which preceded Harriet's suicide; but it appears to me very desirable that the whole story should be brought out much more distinctly, and I can at least show why I say so. The

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correspondence in question took place in the middle of December, 1816. Shelley was married to Mary about a fortnight later ; and in the most emphatic terms he alluded not only to the solace which he derived from the conversation of his host, but to the manner in which my father spoke of Mary. My own recollection goes back to the period, and I have already testified to the state of Shelley's mind. He was just then instituting the process to recover the children, and he caught at an opinion that had been expressed, that, in the event of his again becoming contracted in marriage, there would be no longer any pretence to deprive him of the children.

Let me for a moment pause on this incident, as it establishes two facts of some interest. In the first place, it shows some of the grounds of the very strong and unalterable friendship which subsisted between my father and Mary,—a friendship which stood the test of many vicissitudes, and even of some differences of opinion ; both persons being very sensitive in feeling, quick in temper, thoroughly outspoken, and obstinately tenacious of their own convictions. Secondly, it corroborates what I have said with regard to the community of spirit that Shelley found in his real wife,—the woman who became the companion of his fortunes, of his thoughts, of his sufferings, and of his hopes. It will be seen, that, even before marriage with his second wife, he was counting upon Mary's help in preventing his separation from the two children already born to him. She was a woman uniting intellectual faculties with strong ambitions of affection as well as intellect ; and esteem thus substantially shown, at that early age, by two such men as Percy Shelley and Leigh Hunt, must have conveyed the deepest gratification.

Throughout these communications Shelley evinced the strong pity that he felt for the unhappy being whom he had known. Circumstances had come to his know-

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ledge which had thrown considerable light upon his relations with Harriet. There can be no doubt that one member of the family had hoped to derive gain from the connection with himself, as a person of rank and property. There seems also reason to suppose, that, about the same time, Harriet's father, an aged man, became so ill that his death might be regarded as approaching, and he had something to leave. Poor, foolish Harriet had undoubtedly formed an attachment to Shelley, whom she had been allowed to marry ; but she had then suffered herself to become a tool in the hands of others, and the fact accounted for the idle way in which she importuned him to do things repugnant to his feelings and convictions. She thus exasperated his temper, and lost her own ; they quarrelled, in the ordinary conjugal sense, and, from all I have learned, I am induced to guess, that, when she left him, it was not only in the indulgence of self-will, but also in the vain hope that her retreating would induce him to follow her, perhaps in a more obedient spirit. She sought refuge in her father's house, where she might have expected kindness ; but, as the old man bent towards the grave, with rapid loss of faculties, he became more severe in his treatment of the poor woman ; and she was driven from the paternal roof. This Shelley did not know at the time ; nor did he until afterwards learn the process by which she arrived at her fate. Too late she became aware how fatal to her interests had been the intrigues of which she had been the passive instrument ; and I suspect that she was debarred from seeking forgiveness and help partly by false shame, and partly by the terrible adaptability of weak natures to the condition of the society in which they find themselves. I have said that there is not a trace of evidence or a whisper of scandal against her before her voluntary departure from Shelley, and I have indicated the most

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probable motives of that step ; but subsequently she forfeited her claim to a return, even in the eye of the law. Shelley had information which made him believe that she fell even to the depth of actual prostitution. If she left him, it would appear that she herself was deserted in turn by a man in a very humble grade of life ; and it was in consequence of this desertion that she killed herself.

The change in his personal aspect that showed itself at Marlow appeared also in his writings,—the most typical of his works for this period being naturally the most complete that issued from his pen, the “Revolt of Islam.” We find there identically the same doctrine that there is in “Queen Mab,”—a systematic abhorrence of the servility which renders man captive to power, denunciation of the love of gain which blinds his insight and destroys his energy, of the prostitution of religious faith, and, above all, of the slavery of womanhood. But by this time the doctrine has become more distinct in its expression, and far more powerful in its utterance.

Man seeks for gold in mines, that he may weave  
A lasting chain for his own slavery ;—  
In fear and restless care that he may live  
He toils for others, who must ever be  
The joyless thralls of like captivity ;  
He murders, for his chiefs delight in ruin ;  
He builds the altar, that its idol's fee  
May be his very blood ; he is pursuing—  
O, blind and willing wretch ! his own obscure undoing.  
Woman !—she is his slave, she has become  
A thing I weep to speak—the child of scorn,  
The outcast of a desolated home ;  
Falsehood, and fear, and toil, like waves, have worn  
Channels upon her cheek, which smiles adorn,  
As calm decks the false Ocean :—well ye know  
What Woman is, for none of Woman born,  
Can choose but drain the bitter dregs of woe,  
Which ever from the oppressed to the oppressors flow.

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The indignation against the revolting subjugation of womanhood comes out still more distinctly in the preceding canto, where Cythna relates the horrors to which she was subjected.

One was she among many there, the thralls  
Of the cold Tyrant's cruel lust : and they  
Laughed mournfully in those polluted halls ;  
But she was calm and sad, musing alway  
On loftiest enterprise, till on a day

She told me what a loathsome agony  
Is that when selfishness mocks love's delight,  
Foul as in dream's most fearful imagery  
To dally with the mowing dead—that night  
All torture, fear, or horror made seem light  
Which the soul dreams or knows . . .

The poet bears testimony to the spiritual power which rules throughout Nature ; the monster recovering his dignity while he is under the higher influence.

Even when he saw her wondrous loveliness,  
One moment to great Nature's sacred power  
He bent, and was no longer passionless ;  
But when he bade her to his secret bower  
Be borne, a loveless victim, and she tore  
Her locks in agony, and her words of flame  
And mightier looks availed not ; then he bore  
Again his load of slavery, and became  
A king, a heartless beast, a pageant and a name.

. . . When the day  
Shone on her awful frenzy, from the sight  
Where like a Spirit in fleshly chains she lay  
Struggling, aghast and pale the Tyrant fled away.

Her madness was a beam of light, a power  
Which dawned through the rent soul ; and words it gave,  
Gestures and looks, such as in whirlwinds bore  
Which might not be withstood . . .

The doctrine involved in this passage is very clear, and it marks a decided progress since the days of "Queen Mab." It will be observed that Shelley's

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mind had become familiarized with the idea of a spirit ruling throughout Nature, obedience to which constitutes human power. Most remarkable is the passage in which the tyrant recovers his faculties through his subjection to this spirit, because it indicates Shelley's faithful adhesion to the universal, though oft obscurely formed belief, that the ability to *receive* influence is the most exalted faculty to which human nature can attain, while the exercise of an arbitrary power centring in self is not only debasing, but is an actual destroyer of human faculty.

There can be no doubt that he had profited greatly in his moral condition, as well as in his bodily health, by the greater tranquility which he enjoyed in the society of Mary, and also by the sympathy which gave full play to his ideas, instead of diverting and disappointing them. She was, indeed, herself a woman of extraordinary power, of heart as well as head. Many circumstances conspired to conceal some of her natural faculties. She lost her mother very young; her father—speaking with great diffidence, from a very slight and imperfect knowledge—appeared to me a harsh and ungenial man. She inherited from him her thin voice, but not the steel-edged sharpness of his own; and she inherited, not from him, but from her mother, a largeness of heart that entered proportionately into the working of her mind. She had a masculine capacity for study; for, though I suspect her early schooling was irregular, she remained a student all her life, and by painstaking industry made herself acquainted with any subject that she had to handle. Her command of history and her imaginative power are shown in such books as “Valperga” and “Castruccio”; but the daring originality of her mind comes out most distinctly in her earliest published work, “Frankenstein.” Its leading idea has been ascribed

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to her husband, but, I am sure, unduly ; and the vividness with which she has brought out the monstrous tale in all its horror, but without coarse or revolting incidents, is a proof of the genius which she inherited alike from both her parents. It is clear, also, that the society of Shelley was to her a great school, which she did not appreciate to the full until most calamitously it was taken away ; and yet, of course, she could not fail to learn the greater part of what it had become to her. This again showed itself even in her appearance, after she had spent some years in Italy ; for, while she had grown far more comely than she was in her mere youth, she had acquired a deeper insight into many subjects that interested Shelley, and some others ; and she had learned to express the force of natural affection, which she was born to feel, but which had somehow been stunted and suppressed in her youth. In the preface to the collected edition of his works, she says : “ I have the liveliest recollection of all that was done and said during the period of my knowing him. Every impression is as clear as if stamped yesterday, and I have no apprehension of any mistake in my statements, as far as they go. In other respects I am, indeed, incompetent ; but I feel the importance of the task, and regard it as my most sacred duty. I endeavour to fulfil it in a manner he would himself approve ; and hope in this publication to lay the first stone of a monument due to Shelley’s genius, his sufferings, and his virtues.” And in the postscript, written in November, 1839, she says : “ At my request, the publisher has restored the omitted passages of ‘ Queen Mab.’ I now present this edition as a complete collection of my husband’s poetical works, and I do not foresee that I can hereafter add to or take away a word or line.” So writes the wife-editor ; and then “ The Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley ” begin with a



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dedication to Harriet, restored to its place by Mary. While the biographers of Shelley are chargeable with suppression, the most straightforward and frank of all of them is Mary, who, although not insensible to the passion of jealousy, and carrying with her the painful sense of a life-opportunity not fully used, thus writes the name of Harriet the first on her husband's monument, while she has nobly abstained from telling those things that other persons should have supplied to the narrative. I have heard her accused of an over-anxiety to be admired ; and something of the sort was discernible in society : it was a weakness as venial as it was purely superficial. Away from society, she was as truthful and simple a woman as I have ever met,—was as faithful a friend as the world has produced,—using that unreserved directness towards those whom she regarded with affection which is the very crowning glory of friendly intercourse. I suspect that these qualities came out in their greatest force after her calamity ; for many things which she said in her regret, and passages in Shelley's own poetry, make me doubt whether little habits of temper, and possibly of a refined and exacting coquettishness, had not prevented him from acquiring so full a knowledge of her as she had of him. This was natural for many reasons, and especially two. Shelley had not the opportunity of retrospectively studying her character, and his mind was by nature more constructed than hers was to be preoccupied. If the reader desires a portrait of Mary, he has one in the well-known antique bust sometimes called " Isis " and sometimes " Clytie " : a woman's head and shoulders rising from a lotus-flower. It is most probably the portrait of a Roman lady, is in some degree more elongated and " classic " than Mary ; but, on the other hand, it falls short of her, for it gives no idea of her tall and intellectual forehead, nor has it

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any trace of the bright, animated, and sweet expression that so often lighted up her face.

Attention has often been concentrated on the passage in "Epipsychidion" which appears to relate Shelley's experiences from earliest youth until he met with the noble and unfortunate "Lady Emilia V., now imprisoned in the convent of —," whose own words form the motto to the poem, and a key to the sympathy which the writer felt for her:—"The loving soul launches itself out of the created, and creates in the infinite a world all its own, far different from this dark and fearful abysm." The passage begins,—

There was a Being whom my spirit oft  
Met on its visioned wanderings, far aloft,  
In the clear golden prime of my youth's dawn.

And this being was the worshipped object of Shelley's adoring aspirations in extreme youth ; but it passed by him as a vision, though—

And as a man with mighty loss dismayed,  
I would have followed, though the grave between  
Yawned like a gulf whose spectres are unseen :  
When a voice said:—"O thou of hearts the weakest,  
The phantom is beside thee whom thou seekest."  
Then I—"Where?"—the world's echo answered "where?"

She ever remained the veiled divinity of thoughts that worshipped her, while he went forth into the world with hope and fear,—

Into the wintry forest of our life ;  
And struggling through its error with vain strife,  
And stumbling in my weakness and my haste,  
And half bewildered by new forms, I passed,  
Seeking among those untaught foresters  
If I could find one form resembling hers,  
In which she might have masked herself from me.

The passage grows more and more intelligible. Hitherto he has been simply a dreamy seeker ; but now,

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at last, he thinks that Fate has answered his questioning exclamation, "Where?"

There,—One, whose voice was venom'd melody  
Sate by a well, under blue nightshade bowers;  
The breath of her false mouth was like faint flowers,  
Her touch was as electric poison,—flame  
Out of her looks into my vitals came,  
And from her living cheeks and bosom flew  
A killing air, which pierced like honey-dew  
Into the core of my green heart, and lay  
Upon its leaves; until, as hair grown gray  
O'er a young brow, they hid its unblown prime  
With ruins of unseasonable time.

This is a plain and only too intelligible reference to the college experiences to which I have alluded. The youth for the moment thought that he had encountered her whom he was seeking, but, instead of the Florimel, he found her venal, hideous, and fatal *simulacrum*; and he indicates even the material consequences to himself in his injured aspect and hair touched with gray. He continues his search.

In many mortal forms I rashly sought  
The shadow of that idol of my thought.  
And some were fair—but beauty dies away:  
Others were wise—but honeyed words betray:  
And One was true—oh! why not true to me?  
Then, as a hunted deer that could not flee,  
I turned upon my thoughts, and stood at bay.

"Oh! why not true to me?" has been taken by some very few who were cognizant of the facts as constituting an imputation on the one whom he first married; but I am convinced that the interpretation is wrong, although the surmise on which that interpretation is based was partly correct. Nothing is more evident than the fact that Harriet possessed rather an unusual degree of ability, but enormously less than Shelley desired in the being whom he sought, and

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equally less than his idealizing estimate originally ascribed to her. It is also plain, from her own letters, that she courted his approval in a way far too common with the wives of the artist-tribe, and perhaps with most wives : not being exactly what he wished her to be, and lacking the faculties to become so, she tried to seem it. The desire was partly sincere, partly an affectation, as we discern in such little trifles as her suddenly using the word "thou" in a letter to Hookham where she had previously been using the ordinary colloquial "you." That she was not quite ingenuous we also detect in the fast-and-loose conduct which enabled her, while affecting to become what Shelley deemed her to be, also to play into the hands of very inferior people, who must sometimes have counselled her against him behind his back ; and this, I am sure, is what he means by "Oh ! why not true to me ?" though he may include in the question a fervent regret for the fate which attended her wandering from him. "Then like a hunted deer he turned upon his thoughts and stood at bay," until

The cold day  
Trembled, for pity of my strife and pain.  
When, like a noonday dawn, there shone again  
Deliverance. One stood on my path who seemed  
As like the glorious shape which I had dreamed  
As is the Moon, whose changes ever run  
Into themselves, to the eternal Sun ;

"The cold chaste Moon" fails to satisfy the longing of his soul. "At her silver voice came death and life" ; hope and despondency, expectation from her noble qualities, disappointment at the failure of response, were feelings that sprang from the exaggerations of his ideal longings.

What storms then shook the ocean of my sleep,  
Blotting that Moon, whose pale and waning lips  
Then shrank as in the sickness of eclipse ;—

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The whole passage is worth perusing ; and again a wrong interpretation has been given to this portion of his writing. I am still more firmly convinced that in the other case, when he says, " The planet of that hour was quenched," he alludes to nothing more than the partial failure of his own ideal requirements. At length into the obscure forest came

The Vision I had sought through grief and shame.

I stood, and felt the dawn of my long night  
Was penetrating me with living light :  
I knew it was the Vision veiled from me  
So many years—that it was Emilia.

To grasp the entire meaning of this autobiographical episode, we must remember the extent to which Shelley idealizes. " More popular poets clothe the ideal with familiar and sensible imagery ; Shelley loved to idealize the real,—to gift the mechanism of the material universe with a soul and a voice, and to bestow such also on the most delicate and abstract emotions and thoughts of the mind. Sophocles was his great master in this species of imagery." The heroine of the " Epipsychidion " is an imagination ; a creature, like Raphael's Galatea, copied from no living model, but from "*una certa idea*" ; a thing originally created by himself, and suggested only by the living portrait, as each one of the admired had previously suggested its ideal counterpart. Emilia, then, was the bride of a dream, and, in the indulgence of disappointed longing for a fuller satisfaction of his soul, Shelley mournfully contrasts this vision, who had so eloquently responded to his idealizing through her convent-bars, with Mary, whose stubborn, independent realism had checked and daunted him.

But the last year of Shelley's life had involved a very considerable progress in the formation of his intellectual

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character. The "*Prometheus Unbound*," perhaps at once the most characteristic and the most perfect of all his works, is identical in spirit and tendency even with the earliest, "*Queen Mab*"; but a reperusal of it in comparison with the other writings, even the "*Revolt of Islam*," will show a more distinct presentment of the original ideas, coupled with a much more measured suggestion for acting on them, and a far less bitter allusion to the obstacles; while the charity and love are more all-embracing and apparent than ever. Imperfect as it is for dramatic representation, short-coming even in the power to trace the working of emotions and ideas in utterly diverse characters, the "*Cenci*" does indicate a stronger aptitude for sympathy with other creatures on their own terms than any other of the poet's writings. He had, therefore, sobered in judgment, without declining in his inborn genius; but, on the contrary, with a clearer sense of the limits placed upon individual action, he had gained strength; and I feel certain that a corresponding change had taken place in his perception of the true import and value of characters unlike his own. The last few months of his life at Lerici had very materially contributed to this change. Although I cannot recall any distinct statement to that effect by Mary Shelley, her conversation had left that impression on me; it is also suggested by the way in which he himself spoke of it, and is fully confirmed by the tone of the letters addressed to her from Pisa.

All who have attempted to portray Shelley, either intellectually or physically, have done so from some appreciable, almost personal point of view.

When many eyes see one object, it presents itself in as many different aspects, and the description given by each bears often a slight resemblance to that of others. So it has been with Shelley. The artistic portraits of

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him have happened to be particularly imperfect. I remember seeing a miniature by an amateur friend which actually suggested a form broad and square. The ordinarily received miniature is like almost all of its tribe, and resembles Shelley about as much as a lady in a book of fashions resembles real women ; and it constitutes evidence all the more detrimental and misleading, since it appears to give as well as to receive a colour of verisimilitude from the usual written description, which represents Shelley as "feminine," "almost girlish," "ideal," "angelic," and so forth. The accounts of him by firmer hands are still cramped by the individuality of the authorship.

His school-friend, Hogg, is a gentleman of independent property ; Shelley detected the sensitiveness of his nature ; and I know that the man has been capable of truly generous conduct. How is it, then, that he has written such utterly unintelligible stuff, and has descended to such evasions as to insert initials, lest people should detect amongst Shelley's correspondents a most admirable friend, who happened, it is supposed, to be of plebeian origin ? Mr. Thomas Jefferson Hogg, I surmise, was conscious, somewhat early in life, that his better qualities were not fully appreciated ; and his love of ease, his wit, his perception of the ludicrous, made him take refuge in cynicism until he learned almost to forget the origin of the real meaning of the things he talked about. His account of Shelley is like a figure seen through fantastically distorting panes of glass.

Thomas Love Peacock, again, is a man to whose extraordinary powers Shelley did full justice. He has worked through a long official career without losing his very peculiar dry wit ; but a dry wit was not the man exactly to discern the form of Shelley's mind, or to portray it with accuracy and distinctness.

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Few men knew the poet better than my father ; but a mind checked by "over-refinement," excessive conscientiousness, and an irresistible tendency to find out niceties of difference,—a mind, in short, like that of Hamlet, cultivated rather than corrected by the trials of life, was scarcely suited to comprehend the strong instincts, indomitable will, and complete unity of idea which distinguished Shelley. Accordingly we have from my father a very doubtful portrait, seldom advancing beyond details, which are at once exaggerated and explained away by qualifications.

Byron, I suspect, through the natural strength of his perceptive power, was likely to have formed a better design ; but the two were separated soon after he had begun to learn that such a man as Shelley might be found on the same earth with himself.

One or two others that have written have been mere tourists or acquaintances. Unquestionably the companion who knew him best of all was Mary ; and although she lacked the power of distinct, positive, and absolute portraiture, her writings will be found to contain, together with his own, the best materials for forming an estimate of his natural character.

The real man was reconcilable with all these descriptions. His traits suggested everything that has been said of him ; but his aspect, conformation, and personal qualities contained more than any one has ascribed to him, and more indeed than all put together. A few plain matters-of-fact will make this intelligible. Shelley was a tall man,—nearly, if not quite, five feet ten in height. He was peculiarly slender, and, as I have said already, his chest had palpably enlarged after the usual growing period. He retained the same kind of straightness in the perpendicular outline of each side of him ; his shoulders were the reverse of broad, but yet they were not sloping, and a certain squareness in them



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was naturally incompatible with anything feminine in his appearance. To his last days he still suffered his chest to collapse ; but it was less a stoop than a peculiar mode of holding the head and shoulders,—the face thrown a little forward, and the shoulders slightly elevated ; though the whole attitude below the shoulders, when standing, was unusually upright, and had the appearance of liveness and activity. I have mentioned that bodily vigour which he could display ; and from his action when I last saw him, as well as from Mary's account, it is evident that he had not abandoned his exercises, but the reverse. He had an oval face and delicate features, not unlike those given to him in the well-known miniature. His forehead was high. His fine, dark brown hair, when not cut close, disposed itself in playful and very beautiful curls over his brows and round the back of his neck. He had brown eyes, with a colour in his cheek " like a girl's " ; but as he grew older his complexion bronzed. So far the reality agrees with the current descriptions ; nevertheless they omit material facts. The outline of the features and face possessed a firmness and *hardness* entirely inconsistent with a feminine character. The outline was sharp and firm ; the markings distinct, and indicating an energetic *physique*. The outline of the bone was distinctly perceptible at the temples, on the bridge of the nose, at the back portion of the cheeks, and in the jaw, and the artist could trace the principal muscles of the face. The beard also, although the reverse of strong, was clearly marked, especially about the chin. Thus, although the general aspect was peculiarly slight, youthful, and delicate, yet, when you looked to " the points " of the animal, you saw well enough the indications of a masculine vigour, in many respects far above the average. And what I say of the physical aspect of course bears upon the countenance.

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That changed with every feeling. It usually looked earnest,—when joyful, was singularly bright and animated, like that of a gay young girl,—when saddened, had an aspect of sorrow peculiarly touching, and sometimes it fell into a listless weariness still more mournful ; but for the most part there was a look of active movement, promptitude, vigour, and decision, which bespoke a manly, and even a commanding character.

The general tendency that all who approached Shelley displayed to yield to his dictate is a practical testimony to these qualities ; for his earnestness was apt to take a tone of command so generous, so free, so simple, as to be utterly devoid of offence, and yet to constitute him a sort of tyrant over all who came within his reach.

The weakness ascribed to Shelley's voice was equally taken from exceptional instances, and the account of it usually suggests the idea that he spoke in a falsetto which might almost be mistaken for the " shriek " of a harsh-toned woman. Nothing could be more unlike the reality. The voice was indeed quite peculiar, and I do not know where any parallel to it is likely to be found unless in Lancashire. Shelley had no ear for music,—the words that he wrote for existing airs being, strangely enough, inappropriate in rhythm and even in cadence ; and though he had a manifest relish for music and often talked of it, I do not remember that I ever heard him sing even the briefest snatch. I cannot tell, therefore, what was the " register " of his singing voice ; but his speaking voice unquestionably was then of a high natural counter-tenor. I should say that he usually spoke at a pitch somewhere about the D natural above the base line ; but it was in no respect a falsetto. It was a natural chest-voice, not powerful, but telling, musical, and expressive. In reading aloud, the strain was peculiarly clear, and had a sustained, song-like

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quality, which came out more strongly when, as he often did, he recited verse. When he called out in pain,—a very rare occurrence,—or sometimes in comic playfulness, you might hear the “shrillness” of which people talk; but it was only because the organ was forced beyond the ordinary effort. His usual speech was clear, and yet with a breath in it, with an especially distinct articulation, a soft, vibrating tone, emphatic, pleasant, and persuasive.

It seems to me that these physical characteristics forcibly illustrate the moral and intellectual genius of the man. The impulsiveness which has been ascribed to him is a wrong expression, for it is usually interpreted to mean the action of sudden motives waywardly, capriciously, or at least intermittingly working; whereas the character which Shelley so constantly displayed was an overbearing strength of conviction and feeling, a species of audacious, but chivalrous readiness to act upon conviction as promptly as possible, and, above all, a zealous disposition to say out all that was in his mind. It is better expressed by the word which some satirist put into the mouth of Coleridge, speaking of himself, and, instead of impulsiveness, it should have been called an “utterancy,” coupled with decision and promptitude of action. The physical development of the man with the progress of time may be traced in the advancement of his writings. The physical qualities which are equally to be found in his poetry and prose were quite as manifest in his aspect, and not less so in his conduct of affairs. It must be remembered that his life terminated long before he had arrived half-way, “*nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita*,” when more than one other great intellect has been but commencing its true work. I believe, that, if Shelley had lived, he would himself have been the most potent and useful commentator on his own writings, in the production of

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other and more complete works. But meanwhile the true measure of his genius is to be found in the influence which he has had, not only over those who have proclaimed their debt to him, but over numbers who have mistrusted and even denounced him.

• [*Atlantic Monthly*, February 1863; contributed by Thornton Hunt.]

## A LOVER OF FLOWERS

IN our own time, we may instance the late Mr. Shelley. Of a strong and powerful intellect, his manners were gentle as a summer's evening : his tastes were pure and simple : it was his delight to ramble out into the fields and woods, where he would take his book, or sometimes his pen, and having employed some hours in study, and in speculations on his favourite theme—the advancement of human happiness, would return home with his hat wreathed with briony, or wild convolvulus ; his hand filled with bunches of wild-flowers plucked from the hedges as he passed, and his eyes, indeed every feature, beaming with the benevolence of his heart. He loved to stroll in his garden, chatting with a friend, or accompanied by his Homer or his Bible (of both of which he was a frequent reader) : but one of his chief enjoyments was in sailing, rowing, or floating in his little boat, upon the river : often he would lie down flat in the boat and read, with his face upwards to the sunshine. In this taste for the water he was too venturesome, or perhaps inconsiderate ; for it was rather a thoughtlessness of danger, than a braving of it. In the end, as it is well known, it was fatal to him : never will his friends cease to feel, or to mourn his loss ; though their mourning will be softened by the contemplation of his amiable nature, and by the memory of that gentle and spiritual countenance, “ which seemed not like an inhabitant of the earth ” while it was on it.”

*Flora Domestica*, 3rd ed., 1831, xix.

[By Elizabeth Kent, sister-in-law of Leigh Hunt, and author also of “ Sylvan Sketches ” and some stories for children.]

## MARY SHELLEY DISCUSSED

28th *April* [1823].

☞ [JANE WILLIAMS writes to Leigh Hunt at Firenze on a message which Elizabeth Kent has brought her.]

. . . In the first place you say "The truth is she perplexed me very much in my intercourse with Mrs. S. by giving me accounts which exceedingly embittered it and made me cold and almost inhospitable, and yet at the same time never hinting a word on the subject to Mrs. S. unless indeed she did say something in her letters now and then, which I suspected from the effect which her correspondence used occasionally to have." The inference to be drawn from the above paragraph is this—that my representation of Mary's conduct was the cause of your coldness to her. Now pardon me if I say this is somewhat unjust. If I recollect rightly, our discussion concerning Mary arose from her conduct on a certain occasion (which I need not mention) to which you were a witness as well as myself: and if that sad circumstance had not called it forth, I imagine the discussion would never have been entered into, at all events I did not conceive I was speaking to a stranger who would receive an evil impression from what *I* said: on the contrary I had always heard you spoken of by Mary as her most intimate friend: as one who had known her long, and had lived for some time under her roof. Now it is utterly impossible to do this, and not know whether a person's temper be bad or good: you I imagine as well as myself had seen that the intercourse between Shelley and Mary was not as happy as it should have been; and I remember your telling me that our

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Shelley mentioned several circumstances on that subject that distressed you during the short time that you were together, and that you witnessed the pain he suffered on receiving a letter from Mary at that period. . . .

With regard to the effect my correspondence produced on Mary sometimes I am unable to give any explanation : it must have proceeded from subjects entirely different to the one in question, which has never occupied either my thoughts or my pen since that time. I do not recollect having named you in my letters otherwise than in the way of remembrance and I naturally concluded you would see them. You then say, "What was my awkward situation when I discovered that Mary was bitterly repenting of the trouble she had occasioned Shelley. I felt as if I could not sufficiently make her amends for my former treatment," &c. Now I do not see why Mary's repentance should cause you to feel remorse. You acted coldly because you thought her conduct merited that coldness, as you I am sure are incapable of showing it. Mary repents : there is then no reason for coldness, and with her returning good feeling your kindness to her returns. . . .

[Hunt's view of the later relations of Shelley and Mary found expression in an unpublished letter to Elizabeth Kent, of which by the courtesy of Lady Butterworth I have some extracts. "A cloud hung over her connexion with her husband, which as I latterly thought, only wanted a certain kind of address to explain to both of them and do away. This it was my intention to do, had he lived. It has been my fate to do it afterwards : & oh ! poor thing, how bitterly she repents not having considered it all before ! and how sorry was I, when I found that during all my cold & almost [contemptuous *corrd. to*] cruel treatment of her, on her first residing here, she had been recording her remorse in

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private ! I will tell you some great things when we meet, all to dear S.'s honour (as usual) some to her dishonour & infinite regret ; yet others to her great honour too :—but there was a want of something—of address—of management—her heart too, really worshipping him as it did, wanted—but I cannot write of these things on paper. Suffice it to say, that all her aspirations now are bent upward upon the hope of joining him & his—all of us—in a better & more loving sphere ;—that I have done my best to console & reassure her. . . . I have kept Mrs. W's secret, as well as you : but much as I like her myself, especially on S.'s account, she has not quite intellect enough to see very far into a case where great thoughts, passions, &c. are concerned ; & Mrs. S. one day, with a very melancholy look, & in evident allusion to what Mrs. W. perhaps might allow herself to say of her, said that though others had seen the worst part of her tempers towards S., they had not seen the amends, & requests for pardon, which she always made him in private. These, you will say, had better been public. True ; & she thinks so now, & with *remorse*. . . . She will give you some verses she has written upon him, in which she confesses her repentance. . . .]



# LEIGH HUNT TO MARY SHELLEY

17th August, 1822.

DEAR MARY,

I am sorry after what I said to you last night, that you should have applied to Lord B. on the subject and in this manner. It is not that my self-love is hurt, for that I could have given up, as I have long learnt to do, but it is my love,—my love for my friend ; and for this to make way for the claims of any other love, man's or woman's, I must have great reasons indeed brought me. I do not say it is impossible for such reasons to be brought, but I say that they must be great, unequivocal, and undeniable. In *his* case above all other human beings, no ordinary appearance of rights, even yours, can affect me. With regard to L<sup>d</sup> B. he has no right to bestow the heart, and I am sure pretends to none. If he told you that you should have it, it could only have been from his thinking I could more easily part with it than I can. I begged it at the funeral pile ; I had it ; and his Lordship, who happened to be at a distance at the moment, knew nothing of the matter till it was in my possession.—I have my moments of impatience as well as you : and the heart that beat then with a melancholy rapture, beats as violently now, though with a different mixture of feelings.

Your sincere friend,  
LEIGH HUNT.

[The “ great, unequivocal, and undeniable reasons ” were eventually apparent to Hunt, for Shelley's heart passed to Mary, and was buried with their son. See Mr. Ingpen's “ Shelley in England,” p. 543.]

# A VINDICATION

## THE OCCASIONAL

BY LEIGH HUNT

NO. XV. A WORD OR TWO RESPECTING THE "SHELLEY MEMORIALS." *Shelley not a man to be judged by ordinary rules. Question of the attempted assassination in Wales; of morbid visions; and of his character for veracity. Caution against forged letters. A complete biography of Shelley not to be looked for at present.*

As I am only an occasional contributor to this journal, and have been handsomely permitted by its authorities to say that I differ with it on one or two points of consequence, political and polemical, I shall not be considered, I trust, taking a liberty beyond the pale of its indulgence, when I express a wish, on the strength of my intimacy with Shelley, that I could have had some talk respecting him with the gentleman who wrote the notice of these "Memorials," in last week's *Spectator*, before it was given to the Press. What I should have had to say might possibly have altered some of his conclusions, or conjectures, respecting my friend.

I shall be very brief in alluding to what I mean, because I am waiting to see, whether it will be necessary for me to break a silence with difficulty maintained, and say all which I think and feel respecting a heap of the most extraordinary mistakes and misrepresentations made respecting Shelley and others in a very different quarter; or whether the very extravagance of them, itself now holding its tongue, will not warrant a continuance of the charitable treatment which it has met with, for reasons cognizable by all the rational part of mankind.

## *Shelley*

Shelley was not a man to be judged by ordinary rules of any kind ; much less by men qualified only to abide by those rules outwardly ; and to see and cherish nothing better in their own innermost natures than the grossest selfishness and materialism. He was one of those great and rare spirits, who, by a combination of the extremes of intellectual perceptiveness and nervous sensibility, may be said, instead of being the madmen that ordinary judgments would pronounce them, to possess reason itself in excess ; and by discerning, through their sympathy with the needs of all the world, what all the world ought reasonably to be, are qualified to give rules to their fellow-creatures, and be the founders of new faiths, or improvers on the old. Inasmuch as they are human in the ordinary sense, they may err ; but, inasmuch as they carry humanity to its highest and widest extent, they approach divinity ; for, next to the great mystery which took, and which takes, so much interest in its creatures as to have caused them at all, and still to continue them, what can be held diviner than the spirit which makes the welfare of those creatures paramount to every other consideration ?

As to the question of the attempted assassination in Wales, with what reasonableness can such a circumstance be counted incredible, as long as such things as fanatical hatreds exist, or the jealousies that we see murdering every day, or the commonest inclinations to murder for money ? Mr. Shelley was a man likely to be marked for destruction by any one of these villainies. He was thought at the time to be the enemy of all that was held by fanaticism to warrant them : he appears to have been the unsuspecting cause of jealousies the most intense and extraordinary as long as he lived ; his very memory causes them : and in regard to money, his hand being ever open was seen to lavish it ; and what so tempting to the clown or the midnight drunkard, as

## *Shelley*

his purse ? The "hallucinations," as they are termed, with respect to appearances of things non-existing, are known, it is true, to take place in many over-taxed conditions of the brain or the nerves, though not as necessary forerunners of "madness." Grown and intelligent patients who see them, know them to be illusions ; and remain as reasonable as other men, to all intents and purposes. They are only the sights we see in imagination carried further ; projected from the brain on the retina by some process no more unaccountable than the imagination itself. Thousands of persons not at all lunatic, or likely to become so, often see faces pass in succession before their shut eyes, while going to sleep. They open their eyes, and the faces are gone. Were they to continue, and perhaps in some cases they do, it would be the "hallucination" in question. They generally disappear at the beholder's will. Doubtless he is not so well in health as he ought to be. It is one of kind nature's intimations to him to become better. Perhaps the faces are nerves of his own face, needing repose. But a solid assassin with a pistol is not apt to be a vision of this kind.

In answer to similar and other insinuations of Shelley's want of veracity, made apparently in a very spirit of fondness by those who would willingly find him as truthless as themselves, I have this to say :—that during all the years in which I knew him, I never once observed in his conversation the smallest departure from matter of fact. I was so much impressed with the reverse, that any such inconsistency would have struck and surprised me. He would, it is true, sometimes give persons of doubtful merit more credit than they deserved, in the avowed hope of encouraging them to deserve ; and he would take a politic step or so in more doubtful quarters to compass some object for other people's advantage. How far these expediences accorded with

## *Shelley*

the principle of being "wise as serpents and harmless as doves," I leave the reader to determine. But that he was capable of inventing a story for the purpose of its being believed, or of misstating any circumstance whatsoever, or exaggerating it, or giving it a false colour, never occurred to me as a thing possible.

Look at all the reverential things said of him by his widow, at the affection for him inherited by his son, and the zeal for his memory with which they, and his writings, have inspired his son's wife, and add them to the impression which those writings have produced on the world. Is such a memory again to be made responsible for the mistakes of those who are incompetent to do it justice? Lady Shelley's book, though it does not profess to add much to the information respecting him, yet doubtless for that honest reason, as well as for what it does add, and for what it rescues from misrepresentation, will be read by every admirer of the beautiful poet and greathearted philanthropist. Genuine portions of information like these are all that can be expected of his biography for a good many years to come, especially after what has been seen of documents garbled, and of a whole volume of letters forged. A caution against belief in any letters not countenanced by indisputable authority, and explaining whence they came and through whose hands (for spurious ones, ever since his death, have been sold in all directions, and often greedily accepted), has justly been added to other warnings in his behalf. It was a mistake on the part of his admirers to suppose that any work finally complete respecting him could at present be looked for. From the time of my return from Italy up to a year or two back, I, for one, have been repeatedly applied to from various quarters to write a Life of Shelley. But I always said I never could do it, because I could not expect to live long enough to survive a number of persons, whose names it

## Shelley

would be necessary to bring forward, and to whom, from considerations of family and other delicacies, right or wrong, and even from honest differences of opinion with him on points civil and religious, it would be unwarrantably distressing to do so.

Great men of advanced and unworldly natures need the growth of time to do them a justice equal to their greatness. It is sufficient meanwhile (and they think so), if credit for good intentions be given them by good hearts.

*The Spectator*, August 13th, 1859, pp. 834f.

[The reviewer of the "Shelley Memorials," having replied, protesting that Leigh Hunt had misrepresented his attitude towards Shelley's Tanyrallt story, the *Occasional* for August 20th, 1859, went into "opinions respecting madness and wickedness." Hunt died on August 28th, 1859.

In the second paragraph of the above article, Hunt of course refers to T. J. Hogg and his "Life of Shelley." In July, 1858, he had written a long letter to Sir P. F. Shelley, on these subjects. He therein suggested that Hogg was "out of his wits"; and called the work the "foolish book of an imbecile pretender, whose misdirected absurdities have made me in my own old age speak of a fellow-creature in a manner to which I thought I had bidden a long adieu." To this Lady Shelley had returned answer hinting that Hunt's letter might serve as a review, and discerning "no excuse but madness" for Hogg's behaviour.]

## FUGITIVE VERSES

AT the sale of Dawson Turner's extraordinary hoard of manuscripts in June, 1859, the "copy" from which *The Keepsake* was printed for 1828, 1829 and several other years was offered. Entry 254 of the catalogue is agreeably varied :

KEEPSAKE (The) for 1828, in the handwriting of the several authors ; *half morocco* 4to. 1828. Containing autograph Compositions of Thomas Moore ; P. B. Shelley ; Sir J. Mackintosh ; Hon. C. Phipps ; Chas. Lamb ; and several anonymous contributions.

*The Keepsake* for 1828, edited by W. H. Ainsworth, departed from the blatant custom of the annuals by omitting the names of editor and contributors. Articles by Leigh Hunt have been identified in it. Three poems by Shelley were published in *The Keepsake* for 1829 ; unless there is an error in the auctioneer's description of the 1828 volume, there is an unrecognised piece by him in that also.

Conjecture is a curious activity, but from their theme, rhythm and air, the following stanzas might be that poem :

### THE END OF THE YEAR

#### I

Hark ! the winter wind is singing,  
And the spirit of the year  
Snowy flowers white is flinging  
Gently far and near  
(Such as lie on a maiden dead)  
On the hoar December's head.

## *Shelley*

### II

Yet another winter day,  
And the snowy flower is flown :  
Yet another morning gray,  
And the year is gone !  
Gone, where all have gone before,  
To the sea without a shore.

### III

Time—that endless, endless river  
Floweth still through joy and bale,  
Leaving all that liv'd for ever—  
All the seasons pale,  
~~Deed, and thought, and purpose high~~  
Where Oblivion's people lie.

### IV

Kings, who dwelt in clouded power,  
Conquerors, crown'd with murder'd foes.  
Wits and sages of an hour ;  
Even Beauty's rose  
Faded is, and lost at last ;  
Gone where all the world hath pass'd !





*Keats*



## ON THE DEATH OF KEATS

SIR,

I find by the Daily Papers that the young Poet, John Keats is dead. I shall feel gratified if you will allow a few remarks from his School-fellow and Friend a place in your paper.

It appears that Mr. Keats died of decline at Rome, whither he had retired to repair the inroads which the rupturing of a blood vessel had made upon his constitution. It is not impossible that his premature death may have been brought on by his performing the office of nurse to a younger brother, who also died of a decline ; for his attention to the invalid was so anxious and unwearied, that his friends could see distinctly that his own health had suffered in the exertion. This may have been *one* cause, but I do not believe it was the sole cause. It will be remembered that Keats received some rough and brutal usage from the Reviews about two years since ; particularly from the *Quarterly*, and from a *Northern* one ; which, in the opinion of every gentlemanly and feeling mind, has rendered itself infamous from its coarse pandarism to the depraved appetites of gossips and scandal-mongers. To *what* extent the treatment he received from those writers operated upon his mind, I cannot say : for Keats had a noble—a proud—and an undaunted heart ; but he was very young, only one and twenty. He had all the enthusiasm of the youthful poet burning in him—he thought to take the great world by the hand, and hold its attention while he unburthened the overflowings of an aspiring and ardent imagination ; and his beautiful recasting of “ The Pot of Basil ” proves that he would have done so had he lived. But his ardour was met by the torpedo touch of

## Keats

one, whose "Blood is very snow-broth"; and the exuberant fancies of a young and almost ungovernable fancy were dragged forward by another, and exhibited in gross and wanton caricature. It is truly painful to see the yearnings of an eager and trusting mind thus held up to the fiend-like laugh of a brutal mob, upon the pikes and bayonets of literary mercenaries. If it will be any gratification to Mr. Gifford to know how much he contributed to the discomfort of a generous mind, I can so far satisfy it by informing him that Keats has lain awake through the whole night talking with sensitive bitterness of the unfair treatment he had experienced; and with becoming scorn of the information which was afterwards suggested to him: "That as it was considered he had been rather roughly handled, his *future* productions should be reviewed with less harshness." So much for the integrity and impartiality of criticism! This charge would no doubt be denied with high and flouncing indignation; but *he told me* he had been given to understand as much, and *I believe him*. If the object of this hint was to induce the young Poet to quit the society of those whom he had chosen for his friends, and who had helped him in pushing off his boat from shore, it shows how little his character was known to his assailants. He had a "little body," but he too had a "mighty heart," as any one of them would have discovered, had the same impertinences been offered to him personally which were put forth in their anonymous scandal-rolls. Keats's great crime was his having dedicated his first production to Mr. Leigh Hunt. He should have cowered under the wings of Mr. Croker, and he would have been fostered into "a pretty chicken."

I remember his first introduction to Mr. Hunt, and the pleasure each seemed to derive from the interview. I remember with admiration all that Gentleman's friendship and disinterestedness towards him—dis-

## Keats

interestedness which would surprise those only who do not know him. I remember, too, his first introduction to Mr. Haydon ; and when in the course of conversation that great artist asked him, " if he did not love his country," how the blood rushed to his cheeks and the tears to his eyes, at his energetic reply. His love of freedom was ardent and grand. He once said, that if he should live a few years, he would go over to South America, and write a Poem on Liberty, and now he lies in the land where liberty once flourished, and where it is regenerating.

I hope his friends and admirers (for he had both, and warm ones) will raise a monument to his memory on the classical spot where he died ; and that Canova, the Roman, will contribute that respect so amply in his power to the memory of the young Englishman, who possessed a kindred mind with, and who restamped the loveliest of all the stories of his great countryman—Boccaccio.

And now farewell[1], noble spirit ! You have forsaken us, and taken the long and dark journey towards " that bourne from whence no traveller returns " ; but you have left a memorial of your genius which " posterity will not willingly let die." You have plunged into the gulf, but your golden sandals remain. The storm of life has over-blown, and, " the rest is silence."

Fear no more the heat of the sun,  
Nor the furious winter's rages ;  
Thou thy worldly task hast done,  
Home art gone, and ta'en thy wages.

\* \* \* \*

Quiet consummation have,  
And renowned by thy Grave.

Y.

*Morning Chronicle*, July 27th, 1821.

[Y. may have been C. Cowden Clarke, but the letter does not altogether decide the point.]

## SIDELIGHTS FROM LETTERS TO J. CLARE

A NUMBER of letters written to John Clare by various friends between the years 1820 and 1837 are extant, in which occur some allusions to the literary events and figures of the time. These notes are not without their value, and it was in the first place a natural thing for Taylor the publisher to send his country correspondent the news of John Keats, so much adored by them both. The first reference to Keats in the correspondence which has survived was made by Taylor on March 16th, 1820 :

. . . I was very glad to hear you arrived safe at Home, and fancy I could be almost as glad as you to get away from the Noise and Bustle of London—You don't say how you found Patty and all your Friends, but I hope well, and now I should think they all begin to be sensible of the golden Eggs your Goose has laid—Reynolds, if he was by, would say I mean to call your Genius a Goose of a Genius, but when we get him to Helpstone we will set your Friend the droll chap at him.—I told him and all those whom you mentioned that you desired to be kindly remembered—Keats came to dine with me the Day before yesterday for the first Time since his illness—He was very sorry he did not see you—When I read Solitude to him he observed that the description too much prevailed over the Sentiment—But never mind that—it is a good Fault—and besides you know I must have something to cut out, or “Othello's occupation's gone,” as the Play says.—De Wint thinks the Heron wo<sup>d</sup> have made an appropriate Illustration of Solitude

## Keats

—Hilton will get on with the copy of your Picture as quick as possible . . .

Of "Solitude" it is enough to add that Lamb chose it from Clare's *Village Minstrel* as to his liking; and the mention of De Wint and Hilton is interesting, since they are named by Sir Sidney Colvin as having guaranteed £10 apiece towards the expenses of Keats's voyage to Italy. But the chief fact here is that Keats was well enough to dine with Taylor on March 14th; his first activity after his illness that has hitherto been recorded was his attending the private view of Haydon's huge picture on the 25th (Colvin). As to that occasion, it is perhaps worth mentioning that the *Morning Post* included, among "the principal persons distinguished for rank and talent," C. Lamb, Keats, and Procter.

It was Taylor's habit to give copies of "Endymion" to his friends, and thence arises his next reference to Keats, in a letter of April 27th, 1820:

. . . You have pointed out a very beautiful passage in "Endymion," which I well remembered.—The Book, my good Fellow, is yours. I did not mean it to be returned—I have got all Keats's MSS. in my hands now to make a Selection out of them for another volume, as I did of yours, and I should like to write an Introduction too, as Editor, to speak about the unfair Reception he has met with from the Critics, & especially from the *Quarterly Review*; but perhaps I had better not—However it makes me feel still more inclined to write "An Essay on English Poesy" which I have thought much of, & shall proceed with as soon as I can find Time. . . .

Apparently Taylor's intention never became an accomplished fact, though many years afterwards he put forth



## Keats

“ The Great Pyramid : Why was it Built ? ” He would assuredly have enriched criticism, if the evidence of his letters is anything. His next vote of confidence in Keats was sent to Clare on June 6th, 1820 :

. . . Keats's new Poems will appear in about 3 weeks. I like them much, especially such lines as these :

A Nymph, to whom all hoofed Satyrs Knelt,  
At whose white Feet the languid Tritons pour'd  
Pearls, while on land they wither'd & adored

—She, like a Moon in wane,  
Faded before him, cower'd, nor could restrain  
Her fearful sobs, self-folding like a Flower  
That faints into itself at Evening Hour ;

And as he from one Trance was wakening  
Into another, she began to sing,  
Happy in Beauty, Life, & Love, & every thing,  
A Song of Love, too sweet for earthly Lyres,  
While, like held Breath, the Stars drew in their panting Fires.

—She began to moan & sigh  
Because he mus'd beyond her—knowing well  
That but a Moment's Thought is Passion's passing Bell.

—And, in huge Vessels, Wine  
Come from the gloomy Tun with merry Shine.

Some hungry Spell that Loveliness absorbs,  
There was no recognition in those Orbs.  
“ Lamia ! ” he cried—and no soft-toned Reply.  
The many heard, and the loud Revelry  
Grew hush ; the stately Music no more breathes ;  
The Myrtle sicken'd in a thousand wreaths.  
By faint degrees, Voice, Lute, & Pleasure ceas'd ;  
A deadly Silence Step by Step increas'd,  
Until it seem'd a horrid Presence there,  
And not a Man but felt the Terror in his Hair.  
“ Lamia ! ” he shriek'd ; and nothing but the Shriek,  
With its sad Echo did the Silence break.

I am getting into regular transcription, so I had better

## *Keats*

leave off. The above Extracts are from the 1st Poem of the collection—entitled *Lamia*. . . .

Taylor was evidently copying from the final proofs, and the only variations are those of his own : like Hessey, he liked a page to be well sown with capitals. He had nevertheless a most accurate pen.

Taylor's partner Hessey now comes into our line of march. Not quite so vigorous and notable a letter-writer as Taylor, Hessey was nevertheless a frank and cheerful friend, whose common sense did not stifle his delight in good poets such as Chaucer and Keats. Taylor having gone to Bath "quite exhausted," we find Hessey writing to Clare as follows (June 27th, 1820) :

. . . You will be sorry to hear that poor Keats is very unwell. The sudden change in the weather has brought on a return of his old alarming complaint—& he has been spitting blood for several days. Dr. Darling expresses great Apprehensions for him. I shall send you his new volume of Poems in Drury's \* next Parcel, and I think you will be much pleased with them. For my part, I think no single volume of Poems ever gave me more real delight on the whole than I have received from this. I shall feel anxious to hear your opinion of it. . . .

On the subject of this fresh illness of Keats Sir Sidney Colvin notes that after six weeks or so at Kentish Town he "suffered a set-back in the shape of two slight returns of hæmorrhage from the lung," and "moved for the sake of better nursing into the household of the . . . Hunts at 13 Mortimer Terrace"; and he quotes Mrs. Gisborne, who took tea at Mr. Hunt's on July 13th : "I

— \* A Stamford bookseller, related to Taylor.

## Keats

was much pained by the sight of poor Keats, under sentence of death from Dr. Lamb. He never spoke and looks emaciated." I cannot discover who Dr. Lamb was, but from Hessey's letter it would appear that Keats had been in Dr. Darling's hands, and this is in the next letter stated as a fact. Darling was Taylor's own physician, who lived in Russell Square, and had a long medical experience of artists and literary men, including Hazlitt and Clare. Many of his letters are preserved, but are of a strictly *ad rem* character, although once he weakens so much as to confess, "I am fond of Poetry as a relaxation from Business." Having sent this letter on June 27th, Hessey repeated his bad news when on the 30th he sent the promised "Lamia":

. . . You will receive with this a copy of Keat's New Volume & you will perhaps read it with still more interest when you hear the Author is very unwell. A Blood Vessel in his Lungs broke last week and he has been under Dr. Darling's care ever since. By copious bleedings and active medicines the evil is at present reduced, but the prospect of its return & the evidence it affords of the state of his Constitution make me feel the greatest concern for him. I think the simplicity of *Isabella* will please you much—*Hyperion* is full of the most sublime poetical Images, & the small Poems delight me very much. . . .

Passing by a mention of Keats in connection with the *Stamford Mercury*, in which at the end of July his "Autumn" was reprinted (obviously through the encomiums of Clare), we may next quote Taylor, suffering from "the Pip," and writing \* on August 14th, 1820:

\* J. L. Cherry's *Clare*, 1873, gives this extract, with variants.

## Keats

. . . Keats you know broke a Blood Vessel and has been very ill. He is now recovering, and it is necessary for his getting through the Winter that he should go to Italy, Rome is the place recommended. You are now a richer Man than poor Keats and how much more fortunate ! We have some trouble to get through 500 copies of his work, though it is highly spoken of in the periodical works, but what is most against him, it has been thought necessary in the leading review, the *Quarterly*, to damn his [Poems] for imputed political opinions. Damn them [I say] who could act in so cruel a way to a young man of undoubted Genius. . . .

It should be noted here that Clare's income at this time was £45 a year, and he was the "richer man." On September 17th, Sir Sidney Colvin records, Taylor saw Keats set out on his voyage ; and on the 29th, when, I believe, Keats was landing for "a sunshine holiday"—such as it was—at Lulworth Cove, Taylor sat down to resume his correspondence with Clare :

. . . Hilton I hope is better, and not likely to go yet I trust instead of some of those who can be so much better spared.—Keats is on the water going to Naples & has been for nearly a fortnight, but I fear that contrary & strong winds have still kept him tossing about in the cold English Channel.—If he recovers his Strength he will write to you. I think he wishes to say to you that your Images from Nature are too much introduced without being called for by a particular Sentiment. To meddle with this Subject is bad policy when I am in haste, but perhaps you conceive what it is he means : his Remark is only applicable now and then when he feels as if the description overlaid & stifled that which ought to be the prevailing Idea.—He likes your first

## Keats

pastoral \* which E. D. copied & sent very much indeed. . . .

On December 12th Taylor wrote again, though I am not sure of the precise source of his information :

. . . Keats has arrived at Naples after a tempestuous Voyage which caused him again to spit blood and rendered his surviving it extremely doubtful.—As soon as he was a little recovered he would set out for Rome, where I hope & believe he will meet with real Friends.—Have you seen the Criticism on his “ Endymion ” in the last *Edinburgh Review* ? . . .

A short time after this the inevitable end appears in sight :

. . . Keats is very ill at Rome.—He will never return to England. . . .

and on February 17th Taylor seems to have imagined him already dead :

. . . I have heard again of Keats this Day and he cannot last above a Fortnight longer his Friend says—this was 3 weeks ago—So that gallant Fellow is by this Time gone—I cannot but feel a warm attachment to such a man, but it is useless to him now, and only pains me to no purpose, except that it impels me to think of trying to write his life and do Justice to his Memory—Another unhappy Circumstance, which came to my Knowledge a few Minutes after Keats's Letter, is the great Danger in which poor Scott is lying, the Editor of *Baldwin's Magazine*. . . .

Here follows an account of Scott's quarrel with Lockhart. It is in many ways a pity that Taylor never wrote the life of Keats, for he would have had rare first-hand

\* Perhaps “ William and Robin ” (*Village Minstrel*). E. D., the aforesaid Drury.

## Keats

knowledge and the assistance of Woodhouse. As Keats's best biographer writes, "Taylor and Woodhouse had been first in the field, collecting what material for a memorial volume they could find." But a gulf set between Taylor and Hunt—never mentioned by him in these letters—may have prevented the undertaking.

On March 9th Taylor wrote concerning Scott's funeral and Keats :

. . . We heard yesterday of Keats ; he was still alive, though very weak—but calmer than he had been—It was not considered that he could last many Days longer—Probably at the Time Scott died he also died—In this last Letter we are told that Keats desires to have this Line put upon his Tombstone " Here lies one whose Name was writ on Water "—If I had seen this Inscription on a Stone in a Country Churchyard I should have felt that it recorded the Death of a Poet—or at least of an uncommon Man. . . .

The handwriting of Taylor is clear, and he certainly wrote the words as "*on Water*." The line from Lord Bacon's " Poem on Life " which seems to have been in Keats's mind runs, " But limns on water or but writes in dust." Before the end of March Taylor had the news of Keats's death, writing thus \* to Clare on the 26th :

. . . The life of poor Keats is ended at last : he died at the age of 25—He used to say he should effect nothing upon which he would rest his fame till he was 30, and all our hopes are over at 25. But he has left enough though he did not think so and if his Biographer cannot do him Justice the advocate is in Fault, and not the Cause. Poor Fellow ! Perhaps your Feeling will produce some Lines to his memory. One of the very few Poets of this

\* Printed with changes by Cherry.

## Keats

Day is gone—let another beware of Stamford. I wish you may keep to your Resolution of shunning that place, for it will do you immense Injury if you do not—you know what I would say. Farewell. . . .

The lines to the memory of Keats were soon sent, and were acknowledged by Taylor on April 14th :

. . . I thank you sincerely for it, for the friendly kind Feeling which pervades it is as valuable to me as any Poetry. . . .

On May 1st the publisher wrote :

. . . You shall have Keats's handwriting in a Sonnet if possible. . . .

although I have not yet discovered any sign that the autograph was ever sent. And on June 6th he reverted to the memorial lines, incidentally ridding Clare of the blame for the feeble closing couplet which was printed in due course :

. . . I want to put the Sonnet to Keats at the End of the Volume, but the concluding Lines are not so good I think as you can make them.—Something to this effect would I think be better—

While worth, Enthusiast, shall be cherished here,  
Thy Name with him shall linger & be dear—

or rather

*Thy Worth*, Enthusiast, shall be cherished here,  
Thy Names with him, &c. . . .

Meanwhile Taylor was writing his introduction to Clare's new poems, and from this arose his last reference to Keats in 1821 :

## Keats

. . . I will alter that mention of Keats, for I am not very certain whether it be correct, but if not of him it is not of any one—[we] will say “except one,” & leave every man to [suppose] it means his own peculiar favourite. . . .

The passage thus impersonified by Taylor in its published form \* runs thus :

Clare has created more of these never-dying forms, in the personification of things inanimate and abstract—he has scattered them more profusely about our paths than perhaps any poet of the age except one.

Although Taylor remained Clare's assiduous correspondent for sixteen years more, yet he seems to have made few other direct allusions to Keats in his letters after 1821. From another correspondent it appears that an Edition of Keats's Remains with a life was meditated by him in that year ; but he had as publisher to consider the practical side of things. At all events, in consoling Clare for his dwindling sale, he mentions in 1822 that “of Keats's Poems there have never yet been five hundred sold” ; and as years went by the obscurity which he imagined was befalling Keats, the troubles and estrangement of the *London Magazine*, the silence of his old friends of its hey-day, and even the independence of Clare disheartened him. His faith in Keats held firm, and on November 12th, 1834, we find him referring Clare to a passage in Ebenezer Elliott's poem *The Letter*, where Keats is described as one who

Lived in melody, as if his veins  
Poured Music. . . .

\* *Village Minstrel*, 1821. I. xxvii.



## *Keats*

His want of faith in the public taste was no less steady. The last comment on the matter that he seems to have made to Clare is dated January 9th, 1835 :

. . . Did I tell you that our kindhearted Friend Woodhouse was dead—He died in September last. For some time before he had become a decidedly religious character, & he died in Peace & Hope—His Disease was a Consumption—He has left me all his MS. papers, containing unpublished Poems of Keats, and various other matters relating to Keats, but I don't know when it will be possible for me to do anything with them. I should like to print a complete Edition of Keats's Poems, with several of his Letters, but the world cares nothing for him—I fear that even 250 copies would not sell. . . .

Perhaps this gloomy view of Taylor's was not quite the true one. The Galignani edition of Keats had been issued in 1829 ; the very numerous readers of Hunt's " Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries " had become acquainted with much important detail touching his life and his personality ; and already his work had begun to find a place in the anthologies—witness, for example, the liberal extracts in Croly's successful " Beauties of the British Poets." It would be interesting to learn how Taylor received the continual increase in Keats's reputation, and whether before his death in 1864 he had allowed to be recorded his " last words " both on his personal knowledge of Keats and on what had by that time been published concerning him.

## DELAY OF KEATS'S FAME

June 10, 1837.

LAIRA GREEN, NEAR PLYMOUTH.

MY DEAR HUNT,

The swift answer you require is here. I have all Keats's unpublished poems, to which you are most welcome, piecemeal or at "one fell swoop"; but I send none to you at present, for the following reason:—Geo. Keats has empowered Mr. Dilke to lay an injunction against the publication of any of his deceased brother's works. At least such was the case two years since, and I have heard nothing to the contrary. If Mr. Dilke will consent to the printing, in your new periodical, of some of Keats's *minor* poems, such as sonnets, and other short pieces, I will gladly and immediately send some to you. To print them without his consent would but subject you (so it appears) to an injunction.

I have the "Life," which was read at our Plymouth Institution in December last. As I conceived it my duty to write it, I have pleasure in its existence, but my intention of publishing it is not so eager as it was. 1st, I must not give his unpublished works, nor can I refer to them effectually till they shall be published;—this, however, is not much. 2d., By the experience I had at our Institution, and by what I read in the works of the day, I fear that his fame does not yet stand high enough. 3d., I had rather a cool reply on the subject from Saunders and Otley. And 4th., I would almost rather it was published after my death than it should disturb my tranquillity, from attacks, whether against him by his revilers, or against me—for I know not. . . .

C. A. BROWN.

[Hunt had evidently asked Brown for poems by Keats to print in the *Monthly Repository*.]



*Varia*



## FUGUES

I WAS much delighted with the Letter to Mr. Novello in the last number of the *Liberal* and particularly with your description of the no-state of music in Italy and thought how happy you would feel if you could even get a fugue to hear ; notwithstanding all the Jokes that you and Keats made the last evening I saw him, about their being like two Dogs running after one another through the Dust, &c., &c. . . .

EDWARD HOLMES to LEIGH HUNT, 1823.

## KEATS AND COLERIDGE

MR. COLERIDGE speaks very modestly of his poetry—not affectedly so, but out of a high notion of the art in his predecessors. He delighted the late Mr. Keats, in the course of conversation, with adding, after he had alluded to it,—“if there is any thing I have written which may be *called* poetry.”

LEIGH HUNT, *Examiner*, 1821, p. 664.

## WORDSWORTH'S PRAISE

MR. BROWN accompanied poor Keats on a visit to W——. Keats read to him a part of his “Endymion,” in which, I think, he told me, there is a “Hymn to Pan.” W—— looked red, though grave; and said, at last, “A pretty piece of paganism.”

This reminds me of Kenyon's question to Robinson, —“Did you ever, you who have travelled with him for months together, did you ever hear him speak favourably of any author whatsoever?”

Robinson's reply was, “He certainly is not given to the laudatory.”

W. S. LANDOR to LADY BLESSINGTON [1838 ?]



## BYRON'S REVISED OPINION

MR. LEIGH HUNT . . . was guilty of the unpardonable offence of thinking Mr. Wordsworth the first poet of the day, and of being the first to hail the rise of a young poet, Mr. Keats, who promised, he thought, to rival Mr. Wordsworth. Lord Byron had always objected, with an appearance of spleen, to Mr. Hunt's high estimation of Mr. Wordsworth ; and it seems by the letters which his kind friend Mr. Moore has published, that he became absolutely furious about Keats. The reason was, that he had an instinctive sense of the truth of a great deal that was said about those two poets ; and he had got a notion, that Keats spoke of him with contempt. On seeing a miniature of Mr. Keats put up in Mr. Hunt's study at Pisa, he could not help expressing his astonishment, how the other could admire him. Mr. Hunt said, that Mr. Keats would be sorry to hear him talk so, as he (Mr. Keats) was an admirer of Don Juan. The noble poet softened immediately, turned the conversation upon that point, and upon the merits discernible in Mr. Keats's poetry ; and took the first opportunity of mentioning his genius with honour in Don Juan.

*The Tatler*, January 14th, 1831.

## KEATS ON SCOTT

I RECALL a conversation with my father, in which Keats spoke with admiring delight of Scott's creations ; and I recollect that he then touched especially on the character of Balfour of Burley and the scene in the cave.

THORNTON HUNT, 1871. (MS.)

## JOHN KEATS A GREEK

WHEN somebody expressed his surprise to Shelley, that Keats, who was not very conversant with the Greek language, could write so finely and classically of their gods and goddesses, Shelley replied " He *was* a Greek."

R. H. HORNE'S " New Spirit of the Age," 1844, vol. ii.

## DARKNESS OF JOHN KEATS

“ OH, he was dark, very dark,” said Miss Fenwick to me one day about Keats, and I heard her say it with pain. “ He knew nothing about Christianity.”

SARA COLERIDGE to A. DE VERE,  
*November 4th, 1849.*

## WOODHOUSE, &c.

I HAVE lately been introduced to one of Keats's latter friends; Woodhouse, who, (for a Lawyer) is an—enthusiast in poetry; and—for a Lawyer—a rather good fellow—he made me a present of the “Endymion”; and I should have had no fault to find with him, had he not told me that he desired Keats, when he took leave of him at Gravesend, to draw upon him for what money he might want!!—I fear he panted to impress me with his spirit of munificence. However he appears to have a high reverence for that fine young mind—and that of itself is very redeeming. . . . My kind remembrances to Mrs. Hunt, who will ever possess my gratitude for the pleasant compliment she paid me upon leaving England by the present of poor Keats's cup and saucer. . . .

C. C. CLARKE to LEIGH HUNT,  
*September 20th, 1823.*



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